Celebrity pg 18

Williams denies plan to accept awards for Heath



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FAX • WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2008 metron

Sports pg 12

Winning healing wounds for Lions



Announcement to come today on project funding

RENEWAL An infrastructure announcement is coming today, but Murray Scott, minister of transportation and infrastructure renewal, is tight-lipped about it.

Yesterday Scott wouldn't give any hints about this morning's announcement in Halifax. Immigration Minister Len Goucher will be making the announcement on Scott's behalf along with Defence Minister Peter MacKay.

METRO HALIFAX

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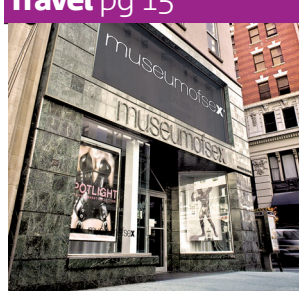
Entertainment pg 17

No Canadian Idol next year

Local pg 3

No jail time for teen torture

Travel pg 15



Indulge in the Museum of Sex



RYAN TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX

John Baird, minister of transport, infrastructure and communities, attended an infrastructure summit at the Delta Halifax yesterday.

Relief on the way?

JENNIFER TAPLIN
jennifer.taplin@metronews.ca

Quicker approval and more money was the request of Atlantic ministers at an infrastructure summit in Halifax yesterday.

Federal Infrastructure Minister John Baird listened to advice on how to streamline the approval process and get more people working by the next construction season.

Premier Rodney MacDonald told reporters he's looking for a speedier approval process for a number of projects, such as transportation corridors, schools and hospitals.

> **"We need shovels in the ground and people working."**
> Rodney MacDonald

"We have a number of infrastructure projects that will help spur the economy in Nova Scotia through a challenging time," he said before the afternoon meeting at the Delta Halifax.

"We need now to put talk into action. We need shovels in the ground and people working in Nova Scotia, and we need that this year, not in two or three years' time."

One way to streamline the process is to cut out federal environmental assessments on smaller projects and just go with the provincial assessments.

"Which in some cases are just as tough or tougher than ours," said Baird in a news conference after the meeting broke up yesterday.

The prime minister announced he's doubling infrastructure funds to $6 billion from $3 billion in 2009, Baird said, which will give the economy a "badly needed shot in the arm."

Baird said he's taking the advice he got from the summit yesterday straight back to Ottawa in preparation for two big items upcoming on the agenda: A first ministers' meeting on Jan. 16 and the budget on Jan. 27.

Murray Scott, Nova Scotia minister of transportation and infrastructure renewal, said the premier is working toward the largest infrastructure program this province has ever seen.

Newfoundland expropriating hydroelectric assets

POWER Newfoundland and Labrador will expropriate AbitibiBowater Inc.'s timber rights and hydroelectric assets when the company closes its remaining newsprint mill there next year, Premier Danny Williams said yesterday.

The firm and its predecessor companies had "the privilege" of using the province's natural resources for the past century and now the government is returning them to their "rightful owners — the people of Newfoundland and Labrador," Williams said.

"It simply makes sense that if Abitibi are not going to continue the operation of a pulp and paper mill and renege on their commitment to our province, they will no longer have access to our natural resources," Williams said in a statement to the provincial legislature.

AbitibiBowater, North America's largest newsprint maker, announced on Dec. 4 it would permanently close its mill in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., as part of a plan to cut costs and pare output due to declining demand. The company will retain control of the Newfoundland hydroelectric assets until the end of March 2009.

REUTERS



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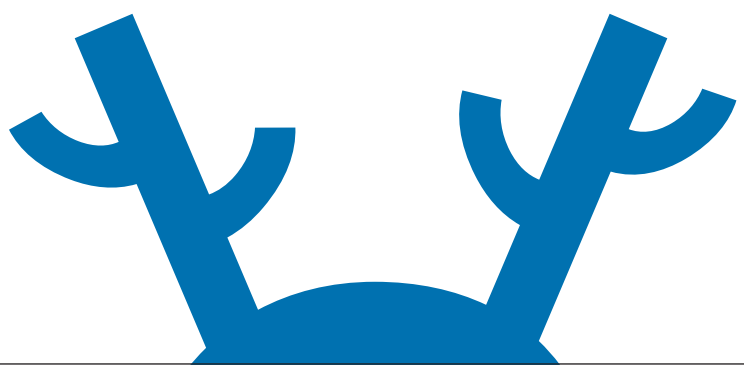
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Peoples Mall

GREENWOOD
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Greenwood Mall

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Maritime Centre
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Local professors receive federal funding for research
Two Mount St. Vincent University professors received federal cash for their research. More than $100,000 will go toward high-tech computer equipment for chemistry and physics researcher Cherif Matta. Jamie Metsala will get nearly $30,000 for a new language and reading lab. METRO HALIFAX

Local



Financial costs of driving impaired

Drinking and driving could cost you far more than you think. The province estimates if you're convicted of impaired driving, it'll cost more than $20,000 in hiked insurance costs over the next five years for you and your spouse. And that doesn't include legal fees, fines or a criminal record. METRO HALIFAX

Airport fee for improvements up $5 in March

FLYING Planning to fly in 2009? It's about to get a bit more expensive.

Halifax international airport will hike its airport-improvement fee by $5 starting on March 1, 2009. This will raise the current $10 fee to $15. Passengers will only be charged the fee when leaving Halifax, but they may be charged another fee by the airport where they arrive.

Everyone who books a ticket between now and February will just pay the $10 fee.

Airport spokesman Peter Spurway says the new fee will raise an extra $5 million. It'll help pay for many of the projects that are expected to be finished in 2009, such as roadways, a new parking garage, runway restoration, terminal renovation and a new multi-tenant cargo facility. These projects will cost approximately $70 million in 2009. In 2008, the airport spent $74 million on renovations.

The airport sees about 3.5 million passengers a year. Spurway thinks this number should stay fairly consistent in the coming year despite the pessimism surrounding the economy.

"If we match our passenger numbers in '09 that we have in '08, we'll be very happy. We may see a percentage slip off a point or two … but like most aspects of the '09 economic situation, no one has a real firm grasp on what '09 is going to bring."

The airport also announced yesterday that Flyglobespan will begin weekly flights from Halifax to Glasgow, Scotland, in May 2009. EDANA ROBITAILLE /FOR METRO HALIFAX

No jail time for torture teen

KAMIA CREELMAN
for Metro Halifax

A teen who helped trap and torture a girl for about four hours last June won't spend any time behind bars.

That's because he also helped carry the 14-year-old victim home. Halifax youth court Judge Pam Williams said yesterday the conflicting behaviour shows how poverty, a bad neighbourhood and peer pressure "scooped him up and caused him to go against his nature."

She handed him a three-month sentence, to be served at home, followed by a year's probation.

Williams said the case "highlights the danger of getting a group of youth together … and what can happen when a ringleader gets an idea and the others follow along.

"I can see how it happened. I can connect the dots."

The youth accepted his sentence: "Whatever I did is what I deserve."

> **"(The case) highlights the danger of getting a group of youth together … and what can happen when a ringleader gets an idea and the others follow along."**
> Judge Pam Williams

On June 14, 2008, the youth was part of a group of five Dartmouth teens who trapped and tortured the girl for about four hours. She was dragged into the house by her hair, punched, kicked, beaten with a mop, burned with cigarettes, and thrown down a stairwell six to 10 times. Her hair was cut off and her shoes were cut up. She was doused with cleaning fluid and cold water, and locked in a freezer.

The youth, 17 at the time, piled furniture to barricade the door, and sat smoking on the lid of the freezer while the girl pounded and screamed herself hoarse inside. But later, the youth half-carried the victim home, with her shoes missing and her legs blackened from the attack.

Court heard at an earlier sentencing that the ringleader, a 16-year-old girl, thought the victim might be involved with her boyfriend.

The judge suggested to the convicted male youth's mother that the family move.

"I wish we could," the mother said.



RYAN TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX

Travellers head through security yesterday at Halifax Robert L. Stanfield International Airport.

Make your holiday travel as stress-free as you possibly can

EDANA ROBITAILLE
for Metro Halifax

'Tis the season for long lines, stale airplane crackers and metal detectors beeping suspiciously around your belt buckle.

Yes, the joys of holiday travel are upon us.

Inexperienced travellers will wonder how to safely navigate their way from check-in, to the departure gate with as little hassle as possible.

Halifax international airport authority spokesman Peter Spurway offered some tips yesterday:

- By going online (www.hiaa.ca) and tracking your flight or just calling the airline, you can find out if the flight is cancelled or delayed.
- Just because there's good weather in Halifax, it doesn't mean the plane will be on time if the weather in your destination is stormy.
- Arrive at least two hours early for the flight, even if it's just domestic, and earlier for international flights. Lines get long, and it's better for everyone's blood pressure if you're not freaking out about missing the plane.
- If you're planning on putting some gifts in your carry-on bags, don't wrap them. If security needs to take a closer look, they'll unwrap it, which slows the line down.

To keep the magic of Christmas alive, don't let your family rummage through your stuff when you arrive at your destination. You can be sneaky and wrap it later in the dead of night.

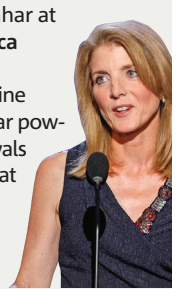
- Finally, liquids, aerosols and gels go in 100 ml containers — and you can only take as many as will fit in a one-litre, clear plastic bag.

Also, leave sharp objects like knives — even that dull Swiss Army knife on your keychain — at home. Knives, for some reason, are sent to the airport chaplain, and they're eventually donated to charity.

metronews.ca
WHAT'S ONLINE TODAY

Video Holiday banner bearing wishes from home heading to Kandahar at **metronews.ca/canada**

Read Caroline Kennedy's star power making rivals for Senate seat nervous at **metronews.ca/world**



News in brief

ARCHIVAL PRESERVATION St. Francis Xavier University, the Coady International Institute and the Angus L. Macdonald Library at St. F.X. have established a new partnership with the federal Department of Canadian Heritage to preserve important archival materials chronicling the history of the Antigonish Movement and the Coady International Institute. The project's goal is to create a portal to the history of the Antigonish Movement while shining a light on the present-day work and positive outcomes of organizations that followed on the heels of the the movement, including the St. F.X. Extension Department and the Coady Institute. The federal government is contributing $45,000, which will be matched with in-kind and cash contributions from the university. METRO HALIFAX

Cirque du Soleil coming to town

Cirque du Soleil, the colourful acrobatic and musical troupe, is coming back to Halifax with Alegria from May 27 to June 17. Tickets go on sale Dec. 16 at 10 a.m. to Cirque Club members and Dec. 20 for everyone else. Visit www.cirquedusoleil.com/alegria. **METRO HALIFAX**

Postal workers picket the wrong minister

JENNIFER TAPLIN
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Through rain and wind, picketing postal workers tried to get their message across to a federal minister yesterday — but they got the wrong one.

About 80 members of the Union of Postal Communications Employees are on strike in Halifax with 2,000 of their brethren across the country. Yesterday they tried to meet with Infrastructure Minister John Baird, who they thought was the minister responsible for Canada Post, but it was recently switched to Rob Merrifield, minister of state.

Nancy MacLean said she tried for several hours to set up a meeting but never heard back from Baird's press secretary.

"We're not striking because we want to hurt people getting their mail. Canada Post has backed us into a corner."
Mike Moeller

"So this morning it was our decision to do some type of demonstration to get our message through and not miss our opportunity while he's here in Halifax," she said.

About a dozen protesters marched from Province House to the Delta Halifax. They stood outside the hotel chanting, while inside, Baird attended an infrastructure summit.

Mike Moeller said their strike is going into its fifth week. So far Canada Post isn't budging, so they decided to step it up a little.

"We have slowed the mail down, there's no question. If we weren't slowing the mail down, they wouldn't be filing injunctions all across the country."

In Halifax, the picketers signed a protocol governing their actions while on strike.

"We're not striking because we want to hurt people getting their mail. Canada Post has backed us into a corner," he said. "Our members are determined and strong right now."

At the heart of the issue is accumulated sick days. Workers in this union want to keep their stored-up sick days.



RYAN TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX

Members of the Union of Postal Communications Employees protest in front of the Delta Halifax yesterday as they try to get the attention of Infrastructure Minister John Baird. The members of the UPCE have been on strike for about five weeks.

NOTICE: Christmas Day and New Year's Day Collection & Processing Services Garbage/Organics/Recyclables

Residents of Halifax Regional Municipality are advised that there will be **no** garbage, organics or recyclables collection services on Christmas Day, Thursday, December 25, 2008. Collection services for that day will be provided on the **following Saturday, December 27, 2008.** Regular municipal collection services will be provided on Boxing Day, December 26, 2008. There will be **no** garbage, organics or recyclables collection services on New Year's Day, Thursday, January 1, 2009. Collection services for that day will be provided on the **following Saturday, January 3, 2009.**

No Collection Christmas Day Thursday, **December 25**, 2008	**Collection will occur** the following **Saturday, December 27, 2008**
No Collection New Year's Day Thursday, **January 1**, 2009	**Collection will occur** the following **Saturday, January 3, 2009**
Otter Lake Facility Closed Christmas Day, Thursday, Dec. 25th Sunday, Dec. 28th New Year's Day, Thursday, Jan. 1st Sunday, Jan. 4th	**Otter Lake Facility Open** Dec. 24th & 31st - 7 am to 6 pm Dec. 26th, 27th, 30th & Jan. 2nd, 3rd - 7 am to 7 pm
HRM Recycling Plant Closed Christmas Day, Thursday, Dec. 25th New Year's Day, Thursday, Jan. 1st	**HRM Recycling Plant Open** Dec. 24th, 26th & 27th - 7:30 am to 6:00 pm Dec. 31st & Jan. 2nd, 3rd - 7:30 am to 6:00 pm

Collection services can begin as early as 7:00 a.m. To ensure collection, residents may place materials curbside the evening prior to collection day. The HRM's residential Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Depot will be **Closed** Saturday, December 27th and Saturday, January 3rd but will be **Open** on Saturday, January 10th, 2009 from 9 am to 4 pm.

After the Holidays...

- Natural Christmas trees: picked up on your organics collection week; must be free of plastic, tinsel, ornaments, metal rings, nails, stands and plastic tree bags
- Compost or mulch your greenery (boughs, trees, etc.)
- Wreaths with metal wire frame or plastic cord go in your garbage bag
- Recycle paper gift wrap free of ribbons, bows and ornaments; place in a grocery bag
- Non-paper gift wrap and foil wrap: place in your garbage bag
- Corrugated cardboard: tie and bundle for recycling
- Boxboard (shoe and cereal type boxes): place in your green cart
- Recycling/re-use tips: save gift wrap, bows, ribbons, cards, etc....for use next year; give old toys and clothing to a charitable organization

Thank you and have a safe and happy holiday season. For more information on HRM's composting and recycling programs, check your 2008 or 2009 collection schedule, visit our website at www.halifax.ca/wrms or call 490-4000.

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Let's WasteLess

Brawl after basketball game ends with 15 people arrested

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A security guard was beaten unconscious and 15 people were arrested after a brawl with police at the Dartmouth bridge terminal Monday evening.

It began after a Dartmouth High basketball game against Citadel High when a group of youths got in an altercation with a Metro Transit guard. The guard was beaten unconscious. A Metro Transit spokesperson said the guard seemed to be sucker-punched from behind.

When police arrived, they found a crowd of as many as 50 to 60 people. Police tried to make an arrest but many in the crowd interfered and began fighting with police.

In the end, 15 people were arrested. Six adults and seven youths now face charges including assault, obstructing an arrest and assaulting a police officer. A 16-year-old is charged with the assault of the security guard. One youth was released without charges.

The guard was sent to hospital but his injuries are not believed to be serious. Three police officers suffered minor injuries. The fight was caught on security camera and the footage is now in the hands of police.

Snow-removal tickets major cash cow for city

JENNIFER TAPLIN
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TICKETS The city made a cool $52,750 on drivers who blocked snowplows last year.

There wasn't an all-out ban on overnight parking like there is this year. Instead, vehicles were ticketed $50 and towed if they obstructed snow removal.

There were 1,055 tickets issued last winter. The $52,750 those tickets generated went into the HRM's general revenue.

This year if you park your car overnight, you could be ticketed $25 and possibly towed.

Reward for info in missing person case up to $150,000

CRIME The Department of Justice's reward for major unsolved crimes program is offering up to $150,000 for information that will lead to the arrest of those responsible in the Leonette Marie Purcell case.

Purcell was reported missing Dec. 14, 2004, from her home in Grand Lake. People with information can call toll-free at 1-888-710-9090.

EDANA ROBITAILLE
/FOR METRO HALIFAX

IT firm set to build in Cold War bunker

HISTORY A Nova Scotia information technology firm is planning on setting up shop in a piece of Cold War history in Debert. Bastionhost has signed a purchase and sale agreement to buy the Diefenbunker from the Colchester Regional Development Agency to host a secure data centre. Its business relies on storing data on multiple computer servers.

Company founder Anton Self said the servers run about the same temperature as a toaster oven, but one room could hold 1,000 servers, creating a lot of heat. But because of the building's design, "chillers" will not be needed. "It's perfect," said Self.

METRO HALIFAX

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Canada: ONE-WAY Tango fares from Halifax. Travel must be completed by November 30, 2009.

ST. JOHN'S, NL	TORONTO	DEER LAKE	MONTRÉAL OTTAWA	WINNIPEG	CALGARY EDMONTON	VANCOUVER	VICTORIA
$99	$109	$120	$124	$194	$209	$239	$244

USA: ONE-WAY Tango Plus fares from Halifax. Travel must be completed by November 30, 2009.

RALEIGH-DURHAM	NEW YORK	ATLANTA	BOSTON	LOS ANGELES	ORLANDO	LAS VEGAS	HONOLULU
$134	$142	$148	$150	$172	$188	$220	$376

No fuel surcharge on flights within Canada and to and from the U.S. + Two free checked bags on all flights

Sun: ONE-WAY fares from Halifax, for travel as indicated below.

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JAN. 1, 2009–NOV. 30, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–NOV. 30, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–NOV. 30, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–NOV. 30, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–NOV. 30, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–NOV. 30, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–NOV. 30, 2009	JAN. 8–26, 2009 MARCH 15–30, 2009
$209	$259	$289	$300	$315	$324	$350	$439

International: Fares are EACH WAY from Halifax and require ROUND-TRIP purchase. Departure dates as indicated below.

LONDON HEATHROW	PARIS	MUNICH[1] FRANKFURT[1]	ZURICH	SÃO PAULO	SANTIAGO	HONG KONG	SYDNEY, AUTRALIA
JAN. 1, 2009–APRIL 30, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–MAY 14, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–MAY 14, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–APRIL 30, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–JUNE 19, 2009	JAN. 6, 2009–MARCH 31, 2009	JAN. 1, 2009–MAY 24, 2009	FEB. 16, 2009–MARCH 31, 2009
$199	$320	$337	$340	$365	$396	$674	$839

Fares displayed do not include fuel surcharge of $45–$226 each way on Sun and International routes. Select Sun routes do not have a fuel surcharge.

These are just some of our amazing sale fares to destinations around the world.
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Offer ends December 22, 2008.

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Province offering trips on how to drive safely this winter
Don't get into an accident this winter. Cut your speed in bad weather, keep a winter survival kit in your car, don't tailgate and watch for black ice. The province is offering more winter driving tips at www.gov.ns.ca/tran/winter. METRO HALIFAX

Transit tax system gets recalculated

New regulations for homes located near transit stops approved by regional council

PAUL MCLEOD
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The way we pay for transit is about to get a major overhaul for the first time since amalgamation.

After about two hours of debate yesterday, regional council approved a new tax structure designed to fix the holes of the previous system that had some people paying and others not.

The old system based how much you paid on whether you lived in an urban, suburban or rural area.

It was a compromise solution when Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford and Halifax County all came together in 1997. But as HRM grew, the system quickly fell out of date.

For example, about 5,000 urban taxpayers currently pay for transit even though they're more than one kilometre away from a bus stop.

Nearly 2,000 suburban and rural taxpayers don't pay and yet they're within one kilometre of a bus stop.

The new system has updated area tax rates for homes within a kilometre of a bus stop.

"If we're going to change the transit system and improve it, we need to change the way we pay for it ... We've got to think regionally once in a while."
Lower Sackville Coun. Bob Harvey

This spurred opposition from some councillors who will see rates in their districts go up. Some argued for a general, municipality-wide rate.

But even opponents softened after Lower Sackville Coun. Bob Harvey gave a speech urging council to embrace change so they can improve Metro Transit.

"If we're going to change the transit system and improve it, we need to change the way we pay for it," said Harvey.

"(We can't say) 'I don't care about the other 23 areas, if I'm going to pay more then I'm not going to accept this.' We've got to think regionally once in a while."

Exhibit **Honouring democracy**



RYAN TAPLIN / METRO HALIFAX

Former premier John Hamm and Leslie Oliver, president of the Black Cultural Society, have a laugh as the Spirit of Democracy exhibit is unveiled yesterday. The new exhibit highlights some of the contributions of the African-Nova Scotian community during the 250 years of parliamentary democracy in Nova Scotia.

$9,000 court win for co-op cabbies

RACHEL BOOMER
rachel.boomer@metronews.ca

A group of taxi drivers who hoped to form a cab co-operative in Halifax have won more than $9,000 in small claims court after the agreement fell apart.

In August 2006, a group of nine or 10 cab drivers agreed to each pay $1,010 to form a co-operative called A-Cab, designed and run by and for cab drivers. But not all the drivers could come up with the money, and by November 2007, disgruntled drivers announced they were quitting and handed in their radios.

But they still considered themselves shareholders, and sued in small claims court to get their money back.

In a decision released Monday, adjudicator Eric Slone agreed that each driver had paid $10 per share in A-Cab, and had loaned the company $1,000 apiece.

"A-Cab cannot simply absorb these individuals' investments and also deny them the status of shareholders.
Eric Slone, adjudicator

"The bottom line is that A-Cab cannot simply absorb these individuals' investments and also deny them the status of shareholders. Money and ownership rights do not vanish so conveniently," Slone said.

He awarded 10 drivers, two of whom have now died, the money he ruled they had loaned to the company.

A-Cab is still operating, and Slone encouraged the suing drivers to be "patient" and get their money back in a way that wouldn't hurt the company.

"This company was a good idea, born of good intentions, and it would be a shame for it to fail," Slone wrote.

Sydney Mines man killed in house fire

FAMILY The community of Sydney Mines is shocked and saddened at the loss of Russell MacDonald, 44, a devoted father and husband, who died in a weekend fire.

Janet Wilkie has a close bond with the MacDonald family since teaching Matthew, Russell's son, who has Marfan syndrome and uses a wheelchair.

"Russell was a devoted husband, father, brother, friend. He and Beth are such strong advocates for their children, first and foremost, but also for anyone else in need," Wilkie said.

Wilkie said the MacDonalds are blessed with a large, close-knit family.

"Russell and Beth are known for their kindness. Whether it was a stray animal, a child, an adult — anyone who needed help — there was always room in their home," she said.

The local contractor with Live Lines Electrical Service is believed to have re-entered the home after he and the entire family initially escaped the fire.

Deputy fire marshal Paul MacCormick said no one should go back into a burning building.

THE CAPE BRETON POST

Funeral service

- Russell MacDonald's funeral will take place at 2 p.m. today in Immaculate Conception Church.

The church is located at 49 Convent St. in Sydney Mines.

- Donations in MacDonald's memory may be made to the IWK Foundation.

New Glasgow convent to become seniors' apartments

HOUSING A New Glasgow building that used to house a convent will be transformed into a seniors' apartment complex.

The town's council adopted the application for the development of a 12-unit building at a meeting Monday night.

The decision came after roughly 20 residents showed up at the meeting to lobby for the development.

Residents living on and around Shelburne Street say they have been experiencing sewer and water problems because of the age of the building.

They asked that the town work with the company developing the complex to see if they can upgrade the sewer system.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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News in brief

POWER Changes to the Your Energy Rebate program mean Nova Scotians who own properties classified as resource taxable, resource forest and resource exempt no longer need to apply for a home-heating rebate. Under this new system, 28,000 more homeowners will receive an automatic rebate on their oil bill.
For more information, visit www.yourenergyrebate.ns.ca.
EDANA ROBITAILLE/FOR METRO HALIFAX

WEAPON A 10-year-old girl was walking to school when she was allegedly threatened with a knife yesterday.
The girl was walking along Main Avenue after a lunch break when a 13-year-old boy allegedly made threatening remarks while holding a knife.
The young victim reported it to school officials who called police. Police arrested the boy and charged him with uttering threats and possessing a weapon.

HOLDUP A man got off a bus in Halifax yesterday and faced a robber with a gun.
The incident allegedly happened just before 4 p.m. in the NorthRidge Road and NovaLea Drive area. The suspect robbed the man of his IPod, then left the scene on foot. The thief is described as a white 17-year-old youth wearing a black mask over his face.
JENNIFER TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX

Grinch steals kids' gifts
A Calgary family is wondering how to tell its kids Santa can't afford to come after a thief broke in and stole virtually all the gifts under the Christmas tree. METRO CANADA

Canada

Reports differ on missing UN envoy

Confusion surrounded the fate of a missing Canadian UN special envoy in Niger yesterday after a dissident Tuareg rebel faction in the West African state first said it was holding him and then denied it.

The contradictory statements about UN envoy Robert Fowler were posted on the website of the Front of Forces for Rectification, a faction which split from the main Niger Tuareg-led rebel group MNJ (Niger Justice Movement) in May.

UN officials said Monday the vehicle in which Fowler, his Canadian aide Louis Guay and a local driver were travelling was found abandoned Sunday evening 45 kilometres northeast of the capital Niamey.

The engine of the UN vehicle was still running, they said.

A first posting yesterday on the FFR website, signed by FFR's commissioner for war, Rhissa Ag Boula, said the group's fighters were holding four people, including Fowler.

"On Dec. 15, 2008, fighters of the Front des Forces de Redressement (FFR) carried out a commando operation in the Tillabery region in which we detained four people including a Canadian diplomat, Mr. Robert Fowler," the posting said.

A subsequent posting hours later by FFR president Mohamed Ag Aoutchiki Kriska denied the group was holding Fowler, but acknowledged he could have been abducted. REUTERS

FFR statement

- "Even if identical movements active in the Tillabery region which adhere to the FFR's ideals may have taken the Canadian diplomat, the FFR cannot take responsibility for this act," FFR president Mohamed Ag Aoutchiki Kriska said in a statement released on his group's website.

Chrysler will be 'treated differently'

BAILOUT Rescue cash for Chrysler will have strict terms to prevent the privately owned automaker from taking advantage of Canadian taxpayers, warns Ontario's economic development minister.

"Chrysler will have to be treated differently," Michael Bryant said yesterday.

He promised the Detroit Three automakers will get the life-saving financial "CPR" they need to prevent the eventual loss of over 500,000 jobs in Ontario predicted in a new study if General Motors, Ford and Chrysler were to go bust.

But there will be strings attached, particularly with Chrysler, which has major assembly operations in Brampton and Windsor, Ont. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Cerberus

- Chrysler's American parent is controlled by Cerberus Capital Management LP, a New York-based firm that manages $27 billion US in assets and has been under fire in Washington for not putting more of its own money into the faltering automaker.

CFB Trenton **Soldiers mourned**



FRED THORNHILL/REUTERS

Family members of Pte. Justin Jones embrace as the hearse carrying Jones' casket arrives at Canadian Forces Base Trenton yesterday. The casket of Jones arrived with those of Cpl. Thomas Hamilton and Pte. John Curwin. Since 2002, 103 Canadian soldiers have died in Afghanistan. Go to metronews.ca/canada for more information.

News in brief

GONDOLA A gondola tower at Whistler Blackcomb split in half yesterday afternoon, stranding skiers and snowboarders for several hours. No one was seriously injured. The incident occurred on the Excalibur gondola near Fitzsimmons Creek, B.C.

PROSTITUTION A B.C. judge tossed out a lawsuit yesterday that claimed the country's prostitution laws were unconstitutional, ruling that a group of former and current prostitutes did not have the legal standing to sue. METRO NEWS SERVICES

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OPEC rallies behind record oil-supply cut

OPEC oil ministers lined up yesterday to support what would be the group's biggest output cut as crude prices fell further. Saudi Arabia was first to publicly support a reduction of two-million barrels per day ahead of OPEC's meeting today. That figure was swiftly endorsed by other group members. **REUTERS**

World



Madoff unlikely to oust Ponzi in lingo

Bernard Madoff may have to wait awhile before his name becomes a term in the popular lexicon and bumps off "Ponzi," which has become shorthand for financial fraud. Madoff's name is already being used for puns, such as, "He Made-off with my money," following his arrest last week on fraud charges in what investigators said was a "Ponzi" scheme that cost his investors $50 billion US.

REUTERS

France **Student protest**



CHARLES PLATIAU/REUTERS

French high school students shout slogans during a demonstration in Paris yesterday, the day after French Education Minister Xavier Darcos announced he would indefinitely delay a reform of the secondary school curriculum after protests by pupils turned violent last week. The placard reads Withdraw the Darcos Reform.

Italy pursues 100 mobsters

Italian police said they launched a pre-dawn swoop yesterday to arrest 100 people suspected of trying to rebuild the top ranks of the Sicilian Mafia, which has been weakened by the recent arrests of powerful mob leaders.

"If Cosa Nostra was on its knees after operation Gotha in June 2006, then with operation Perseus it has been prevented from getting up again."
Pietro Grasso

The "Perseus" operation, conducted with more than 1,200 police officers, helicopters and anti-drug units, was in progress across Sicily and parts of Tuscany.

The mobsters are being pursued on charges of extortion, trafficking arms and drugs, and having mafia links.

They are suspected of trying to recreate the top-level Cosa Nostra body responsible for taking important decisions, with the support of Matteo Messina Denaro, one of the most powerful godfathers on the run.

"If Cosa Nostra was on its knees after operation Gotha in June 2006, then with operation Perseus it has been prevented from getting up again," said Italy's anti-mafia prosecutor Pietro Grasso.

Italian police have inflicted major blows on the Sicilian mafia with arrests of several high-profile mafiosi in recent years, such as the "boss of bosses," Bernardo Provenzano, in 2006 and his heir apparent, Salvatore Lo Piccolo, in 2007.

Young Sicilians have also been leading efforts to rally local business people into resisting payment of the "pizzo," or protection money that helps fund the Mafia's activities.

REUTERS

Dozens of Russian tourists die in Israel bus crash

FATALITIES An Israeli bus full of newly arrived Russian tourists veered off a desert road and plunged down a ravine yesterday, killing at least 24 people and seriously injuring about a dozen more.

"I saw people flying out of the windows as the bus rolled down the slope."
Witness to the crash

The crash, in the desert north of the Israeli Red Sea resort of Eilat, was one of the worst Israeli road accidents in years.

Soldiers, police and rescue workers rushed to the scene and army helicopters helped evacuate dozens of injured survivors.

"I saw people flying out of the windows as the bus rolled down the slope," said one driver who witnessed the crash.

Bodies, baggage and bits of wreckage were scattered over the steep slope down from the highway, and the bus lay on its side on the rocky desert floor.

An officer shouted orders through a bullhorn as stretcher teams laid out a long line of white plastic body bags. Israel's Airport Authority said the victims had just arrived from St. Petersburg at Ovda airport, which serves Eilat. A police source said they were Russian tourists. An official at the Russian Embassy in Tel Aviv said he had no confirmed information. **REUTERS**

News in brief

DISEASE Eastern China's Jiangsu province has culled 377,000 poultry after laying hens tested positive for the H5N1 bird flu virus, the Ministry of Agriculture said yesterday, in the first reported case since the early summer.

PIRACY The UN Security Council yesterday authorized countries fighting piracy off the Somali coast to take action also on Somalia's territory and in its airspace, subject to approval by the country's government.

REUTERS

Greek PM pledges to fight corruption after protests

UNREST Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis pledged yesterday to tackle corruption after 11 days of violence triggered by the police killing of a teenager and fuelled by public anger at scandals and a slowing economy.

About 100 youths attacked a police station in Athens, setting fire to a bus and four cars belonging to officers. Students briefly occupied the state TV station, interrupting the news, and violence flared in the northern city of Thessaloniki.

Karamanlis said helping Greeks — a fifth of whom live in poverty — was a priority, but his options were restricted by the country's onerous debt, made worse by the riots that quickly spread across Greece.

REUTERS

Pakistan eyes crackdown after Mumbai attacks: Kerry

EFFORTS The attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai last month have convinced Pakistani leaders of the need for a serious crackdown on the Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), U.S. Senator John Kerry said yesterday.

India has accused LeT of involvement in the November attacks that killed 179 people.

Pakistani security forces have detained more people than India was aware of in a sweep that began a little over a week ago, and the government was intent on convicting anyone linked to the Mumbai attacks, Kerry said.

Kerry was visiting Pakistan after a trip to India as part of an effort to reduce tensions between the two rivals.

REUTERS

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Comment & Views

Comment

Winter wonderland

Vancouverites wondering what happened to global warming

TheWestView



Paul Sullivan
Journalist & Media Consultant

I've had it with all the complaining from the Prairies about the alleged "deep freeze" they're enduring.

Cold it may be, but they're used to it. They even have those little plug thingies sticking out of the front end of their combines to keep them nice and warm. And I understand they have to wear long underwear between October and April or face a stiff fine.

Those people are prepared.

Here in Vancouver, however, it's only going up to zero today (gasp!), and these Arctic conditions have taken us completely by surprise. It's a state of emergency. Our local competitor, the Vancouver Sun, is so swept up in the general panic that yesterday morning's front page featured a 200-point headline warning: "Get ready for 10 days below zero."

Below the fold there's an entirely serious piece from star columnist Pete McMartin sternly taking the Environment Canada guy to task for failing to predict a five-centimetre snowfall. It's a scandal!

But we ain't seen nothin' yet. According to the long-term forecast from Accuweather, cold records could be smashed over the next few days. The overnight temperature could plummet to –11 C. The chastened Environment Canada guy has been forced to admit there may even be more snow coming.

Whatever happened to global warming?

Laugh you may, but this is a city that practises annual winter denial. The beaches and sidewalk cafes are busy (thanks to those industrial-grade heaters), and every year we wait for a mild day and dash out with the lawn mower and the camera so we can send our hapless eastern relatives pictures of us mowing the lawn in December.



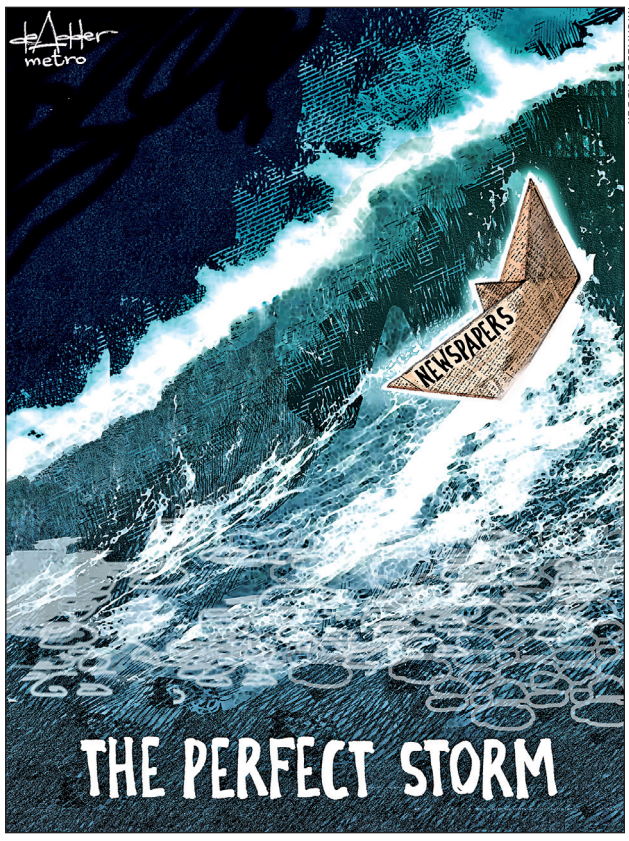
There will be no lawns mowed this December.

There will be no lawns this December. We may even — wait for it — be forced to endure a white Christmas and all the hoo-hah that goes with it.

Of course, our dirty little secret is that it snows every winter in Vancouver; at least it has since I've lived here — nearly 20 years. It usually lasts for a couple days and then the rain comes and mercifully washes it all away. But every time it snows, you'd think it was the first time. We crash into each other with reckless abandon, close all the schools and lose power, forced to huddle in the dark by candlelight until it blows over.

One day, perhaps, we'll all go, "Oh!" and buy hats and mitts and shovels and get on with it. In the meantime, if this year's Christmas card includes a photo of Uncle Fred mowing his lawn in December, be suspicious. Be very suspicious.

Paul Sullivan is a Vancouver-based journalist and owner of Sullivan Media Consulting.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

Word on the street: Would Michael Ignatieff make a better prime minister than Stephen Harper?

Hsham Alseayed
age 19, Halifax
A: Of course. Harper is only helping beneficial provinces. He's completely ignoring Nova Scotia.

Laura Fitzpatrick
age 24, Bedford
A: I don't know a lot about him, but anything is better than Harper. I am not for the Conservatives.

Craig Davison
age 38, Ottawa
A: My issue with Ignatieff is that I don't consider him Canadian ... It seems like he's come back with the sole objective of meeting some political desire of his.

Alexandra Ma
age 17, Toronto
A: (Ignatieff), mainly because I don't like Stephen Harper's view on things and the direction he's leading our country.

Nick Lopardo
age 24, Vancouver
A: Yes, I think he would. I'm not too pleased about the job the Conservatives have done. I'm also glad the Liberals have a new leader.

Fabienne Chery
age 20, Calgary
A: Michael who? Whoever he is, he can't be worse than Harper. (Harper) wasn't very bright right after the last election.



Letters

Canada is not a colony tied to the mother country

Re: Are we a colony? (Dec. 16)

Enough already! Do we have to hear from every pompous pundit on the pros and cons of our constitutional monarchy form of government? Is it out of sheer ignorance of how the system works, mean-spirited criticism or simple lack of anything interesting to say that people such as Mr. Martin keep bringing up the Queen and her representative, the governor general, in relation to Harper's pathetic fiasco of the past few weeks?

Get over it, gentlemen. Canada is not a colony tied to the mother country, and the Queen is not a foreign monarch.

JOHN TAGG, TORONTO

Elephants need to be protected from zoos

A new study (Dec. 12) showing that elephants die early in captivity has generated the predictable zoo industry denials. Officials in Canada and the U.S. claim the report is flawed and conditions in North American zoos today are different from those surveyed for the study.

The stark, undersized elephant exhibits in Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton or in most any other Canadian or American zoo should be enough to convince anyone that things are just as bad here in North America.

It's clear that elephants don't need to be protected by zoos, they need to be protected from zoos.

ROB LAIDLAW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ZOOCHECK CANADA

Quebec taken to task over naming of tree

Shame on the Liberals in Quebec to entertain such petty issues (Christmas tree or holiday tree) when the country is in recession.

I come from a country where there are only four per cent Christians, yet we never thought of changing the name of the Christmas season to holiday season or Christmas tree to holiday tree.

One need not compromise or change their religious values to accommodate people of other religions. Calling a Christmas tree a holiday tree is very offensive.

BINDU MATHEW, TORONTO

It's your turn to tell others what you think. E-mail your thoughts and opinions to: halifaxletters@metronews.ca
Letters must include sender's full name, address and phone number – street name and phone numbers will NOT be published. We reserve the right to edit letters.

10 Playboy has apologized for its Mexican edition's recent cover, which bore a nude model resembling the Virgin Mary, published days before a festival dedicated to the virgin. REUTERS

Business

EDITOR: FERMIN DESOUZA, FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Spending urged

The federal government should pump $10 billion to $13 billion in additional spending into the flagging economy in 2009 to help pull the country out of a steep downturn, even though it could help push a deficit to $20 billion or more, the Conference Board of Canada says.

In a report titled Fixing the Recession: Policy Guidance for Canadian Leaders, the Ottawa-based think-tank argued going into the red "is a price worth paying for an expedited economic recovery and a return of consumer and investor confidence in our economy." But it also called for "a well-developed plan to get back into fiscal balance as soon as the economy recovers."

Citing continuing tightness in credit markets, a lag time of about 18 months before central bank rate cuts work their way into the economy, and the reluctance of commercial banks to pass on the full impact of rate cuts, the report argued "fiscal policy must ride to the rescue."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Enchanced EI

- The Conference Board urged spending on programs that support unemployed workers, including providing "a more level playing field nationally for employment insurance," with enhanced coverage and longer benefits in provinces like Ontario.

Madoff Scheme goes bust



JOE SKIPPER/REUTERS

A runner passes a home owned by Bernard Madoff in Palm Beach, Fla., yesterday. Prosecutors and regulators have accused the 70-year-old, who was chairman of the Nasdaq Stock Market in the early '90s, of masterminding a Ponzi scheme of epic proportions through his investment advisory business, which managed at least one hedge fund.

U.S. stocks gain on intrest-rate cut

RATES U.S. stocks accelerated gains yesterday after the Federal Reserve's surprisingly big interest-rate cut and financials surged on optimism inspired by a smaller-than-feared loss from Goldman Sachs.

"The rate cut was definitely more than a lot of people were expecting and that's really helping the market here, but the big takeaway here is Bernanke's going back out into the market and trying to loosen things up in credit," said Jocelynn Drake, market analyst at Schaeffer's Investment Research in Cincinnati. REUTERS

In brief

OILSANDS U.S. refiner Sunoco Inc. wants to sell its chemical business and is looking for a partner to supply it with crude oil from the Canadian oilsands, CEO Lynn Laverty Elsenhans said yesterday.

ENERGY Wind-power developments planned in Alberta will require $1.83 billion in new transmission lines to connect the electricity to markets, the province's system operator said yesterday.

JOBS Quebecor Inc.'s newspaper unit, Sun Media, said yesterday it will cut 600 jobs because of the economic downturn and problems in the print media industry. REUTERS

Telus axes BCE merger speculation

Telus Corp. is not pursuing a merger with rival BCE Inc, Telus's chief financial officer said yesterday.

"We're just focused on executing our business plan," Robert McFarlane told Reuters. "We're not working on an acquisition of BCE." His comments come less than a week after a $34.8 billion buyout of BCE by a group of private-equity investors ended in collapse.

BCE shares were down 33 cents at $21.13 on the TSX yesterday afternoon. Telus, which also released its 2009 outlook yesterday, fell 78 cents to $33.35. REUTERS

Association calls for forestry aid

BAILOUT The Canadian government must not overlook the limping forestry industry as it helps out the auto and banking sectors, the Forest Products Association of Canada said yesterday.

The government will consider providing emergency aid to sectors other than automakers, including the forestry industry, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said yesterday. REUTERS

THE DAILY BUSINESS BUZZ

Lockeport gets waterfront development funding: The community of Lockeport will receive over $63,000 from ACOA for the waterfront development and branding of the Lockeport Loop area. Keith Ashfield, Minister of State (ACOA) said the investment will strengthen and diversify Lockeport and surrounding communities and resulting in considerable economic spin-offs.

Household debt growth slowed: Household debt growth slowed in the third quarter, owing largely to lower new mortgage borrowing. Household debt (consumer credit and mortgages) relative to net worth edged up during the quarter, according to Statistics Canada. Households had 20.9 cents of debt for every dollar of net worth and $1.27 of debt for every dollar of disposable income. However, the increase in household debt relative to net worth was larger in the U.S. in the third quarter.

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Manning brothers going to Pro Bowl
Peyton and Eli Manning were voted to the Pro Bowl yesterday, the first time quarterback-playing brothers have been chosen for the same all-star game. The New York Jets led all teams with seven selections, including Brett Favre, who will be in his 10th Pro Bowl. The game will be played Feb. 8 in Honolulu. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports



Harrington PGA player of the year

Padraig Harrington, left, was voted the PGA Tour's player of the year by his peers yesterday, becoming the first European player to win the award since it began in 1990. Harrington's only two wins this year were majors — the British Open and PGA Championship — making him the first European to win successive majors in the same season, and joining Tiger Woods as the only player to achieve that feat in the last 20 years. METRO NEWS SERVICES

SPORTS@METRONEWS.CA

Canes shut down Habs

Staal and company hand Montreal its third loss in a row

NHL ROUND UP

Hurricanes 3, Canadiens 2

Eric Staal scored twice and Joe Corvo netted the game-winner, as the Carolina Hurricanes took advantage of their power-play chances and upended the Montreal Canadiens, 3-2 last night in Raleigh, N.C.

Cam Ward recorded 22 saves for Carolina, which had lost two straight and five of six coming in but converted three of its 11 power-play opportunities.

"You know, we didn't start off as well as we'd like to on the power play, but I give some credit to our fans. They didn't jump on the guys right away," Carolina associate head coach Ron Francis said. "They were patient with them and we ended up scoring some goals that weren't exactly pretty but at the end of the day we scored three goals on the power play and we won the hockey game. That's what matters."

Alex Kovalev ended a 19-game goal drought with a short-handed tally and Guillaume Latendresse scored on a penalty shot for the Canadiens, who have dropped three straight and four of five overall. Jaroslav Halak made 24 saves in the loss.



ELLEN OZIER/REUTERS

Carolina Hurricanes players Eric Staal, Joe Corvo, Sergei Samsonov, Ray Whitney and Rod Brind'Amour (left to right) celebrate Corvo's winning goal against the Montreal Canadiens in last night's game.

In other action last night:

Maple Leafs 3, Devils 2 (SO) — Jason Blake netted the game-winning shootout goal in style and Vesa Toskala had 25 regulation saves along with three shootout stops as the Toronto Maple Leafs bested the New Jersey Devils, 3-2, at Air Canada Centre in Toronto.

Nik Antropov and Jeremy Williams both scored in regulation while Tomas Kaberle notched two assists for Toronto, which achieved its longest winning streak of the season with its third consecutive victory.

Thrashers 4, Senators 1 — Colby Armstrong netted a pair of goals and Ondrej Pavelec made 28 saves to help the Atlanta Thrashers top the Senators, 4-1 in Ottawa.

Vyacheslav Kozlov scored on the power play as Atlanta snapped a three-game skid. Todd White added an empty-netter for the victors.

Martin Gerber, coming off a shutout, was beaten three times on 24 shots, and Chris Kelly registered the only Senators goal in the club's fourth loss in five games.

Flyers 5, Avalanche 2 — Simon Gagne and Mike Richards recorded a goal and two assists each as the Flyers topped the Colorado Avalanche, 5-2, at the Wachovia Center in Philadelphia.

Mike Knuble, Jeff Carter and Joffrey Lupul also tallied for the Flyers, who have won five games in a row.

Capitals 5, Islanders 4 (OT) — Alex Ovechkin's laser wrist shot from the slot in the waning seconds of overtime lifted the Washington Capitals to a 5-4 win over the New York Islanders at Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, N.Y.

Ovechkin also scored in regulation along with Boyd Gordon, Brooks Laich and Milan Jurcina for the Capitals, who have won four consecutive games. Brent Johnson stopped 35 shots in the victory.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Bertuzzi, Moore meet at lawsuit mediation

Todd Bertuzzi and Steve Moore met across a table Monday in Toronto as part of a court-ordered mediation in a $38-million lawsuit Moore filed after Bertuzzi grabbed him from behind, punched him in the head and landed on top of him during a 2004 NHL game.



Todd Bertuzzi

Moore, who was a member of the Colorado Avalanche at the time, suffered three fractured vertebrae in his neck and a concussion and hasn't played hockey since. "I think he's probably doing as well as to be expected under the circumstances," Toronto lawyer Tim Danson said of his client, Moore, yesterday. "He still has to deal with the loss of his dream and that's a hard thing to come to grips with."

Bertuzzi's former coach Marc Crawford (then bench boss of the Vancouver Canucks for whom Bertuzzi played in 2004) and lawyers for all parties were also present Monday.

"All I can say is the mediation has taken place and it has concluded," the lawyer said.

Bertuzzi, the Canucks and the club's parent company are named as defendants in the suit filed by Moore and his family. The suit is seeking lost income and damages. Bertuzzi has said in legal documents that Crawford should be held responsible for any damages awarded to Moore. Crawford has claimed in other court documents that Bertuzzi disobeyed instructions to leave the ice in Vancouver before Moore was attacked.

Bertuzzi was charged with assault in June 2004 after a four-month investigation. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to probation and community service. He also was suspended from playing the final 13 regular-season games of the 2003-04 season and the playoffs. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Rautins' contract renewed, with a catch

The coaches of the national men's and women's basketball teams have been put on notice — win or it's time to move on.

Leo Rautins and Allison McNeil have been given contract extensions — and some high-powered help from eras when the national teams were fixtures at the top international competitions — but only with the proviso that they get their teams to the 2010 world championships.

"Initially, that's difficult for a coach to accept but as we walked through the potential of the new structure ... both were enthusiastic," Canada Basketball CEO Wayne Parrish said yesterday.

Rautins and McNeil will have a new group to bounce ideas off — and take advice from — as Canada Basketball has established a "council of excellence" that Parrish likened to a group of village elders.

The nine-member panel includes Raptors senior VP Maurizio Gherardini and a host of names from Canadian basketball history.

"To say that our basketball community in our country has been splintered is an understatement," said Rautins. "To be able to put this council together and bring back people that have been part of the program, very major people in basketball in this country, is huge."

Gherardini will act as the managing director of the men's program, his counterpart on the women's side has yet to be determined.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



Leo Rautins blames a splintering in the Canadian basketball community for the national program's poor performance over the past six years.

"To be able to put this council together and bring back people that have been part of the program, very major people in basketball in this country, is huge."
Leo Rautins

Furcal signs deal with Braves

MLB Free agent infielder Rafael Furcal has agreed a three-year deal to return to the Atlanta Braves, Major League Baseball said yesterday.

The 31-year-old will go back to Atlanta providing he passes a medical, said the MLB on its website.

Furcal, who played for the Braves from 2000-05, spent the last three seasons as shortstop for the Los Angeles Dodgers but missed most of the 2008 campaign with a back injury.

Meanwhile, the Baltimore Orioles have signed free agent Cesar Izturis to a $6-million two-year contract to fill their vacancy at shortstop, the team said yesterday.

REUTERS

Sports in brief

NHL The Columbus Blue Jackets assigned goaltender Fredrik Norrena to the Syracuse Crunch of the American Hockey League yesterday.

NHL Chicago Blackhawks defenceman James Wisniewski has been activated from injured reserve after recovering from knee surgery performed in the summer.

NHL Buffalo Sabres forward Nathan Gerbe is expected to miss at least 10 days due to an upper body injury. The club made the announcement yesterday, three days after the young forward took a hard hit late in a 4-2 win over the New Jersey Devils.

NFL The Cleveland Browns will be without tight end Steve Heiden and linebacker Beau Bell for the final two games of the season as both are scheduled to have season-ending surgery for separate injuries.

NFL The Falcons placed wide receiver Laurent Robinson and cornerback David Irons on injured reserve yesterday.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Legendary lineup for Oldtimers' Challenge

Hall of Famers Bryan Trottier, Dale Hawerchuk, Steve Shutt and Billy Smith are scheduled to play for the Legendary Hockey Heroes when the team visits the Metro Centre for the Oldtimers' Challenge on Jan. 14. The squad will play a team of police personnel to raise money for charity. METRO NEWS SERVICES

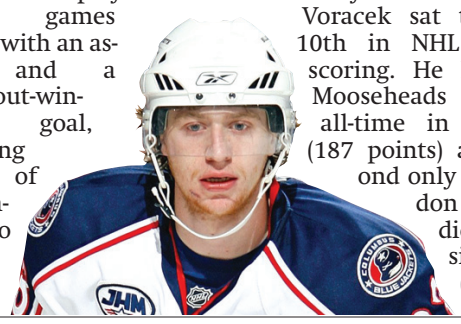
Voracek catches breath

MATTHEW WUEST
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The Columbus Blue Jackets are eager to see if rookie Jakub Voracek can catch a second wind.

Voracek, who starred for the Halifax Mooseheads the past two seasons, is trying to regain his footing as an NHL rookie after a one-game benching on Dec. 7.

The 19-year-old right-winger has played in three games since, with an assist and a shootout-winning goal, showing signs of returning to the form that saw him record 10 points in his first 13 games. He has three points in 16 games since.



"Sometimes you just need to catch your breath," Blue Jackets coach Ken Hitchcock told the Columbus Dispatch when asked about the benching.

"The way this league is, it just engulfs you and overwhelms you when you're a young player, and sometimes you just need to catch your breath."

Voracek sat tied for 10th in NHL rookie scoring. He left the Mooseheads eighth all-time in scoring (187 points) and second only to Brandon Benedict in assists (131).

Winning heals all wounds

Lions know attendance will improve as team comes around

MATTHEW WUEST
matthew.wuest@metronews.ca

The Halifax Lions haven't had much to roar about so far this season — both on the ice and at the gate.

The Lions, the latest incarnation of the Maritime Junior A Hockey League in Halifax, have won just six times in 35 games and are averaging crowds of just 300 at the Forum.

The losses aren't necessarily a surprise — the Lions are basically an expansion team that brought just two players with them as part of the relocation of the Antigonish Bulldogs.

But the benchmark for getting the franchise off the ground was a nightly attendance of 500 or more.

"Would (ownership) like to see more fans? Absolutely," Lions head coach Tyler Naugler said.

"But do they see what we're trying to accomplish here and see us getting there and being successful? Yeah, very much. They're patient."



RYAN TAPLIN/METRO HALIFAX

The Lions' Chad Locke is among the top five in MJAHL scoring.

The Lions feel that despite their abysmal record — 6-24-5, last in the Bent Division — they're icing a quality product, and as the franchise improves, so too will crowds.

They're a young team with a surprising offence, led by a pair of 20-year-old scoring sensations, Chad Locke and Jonathan McArthur. Both are in the top five in league scoring, helping the Lions score as much as some contenders.

But Naugler is more stoked about a group of productive young forwards led by Stephen Popovic, Simon Bissonnette, Bradley MacDonald, Wayne Bedecki and Tanner Manson.

All five could be the foundation of next season's team.

Where he's not so keen is on defence and in goal. The Lions have allowed roughly 5.5 goals per game.

"We need to get better defensively and we need to get better in net," Naugler said. "We've given up the most shots, the most goals, and we have the lowest goals-against average and the lowest save percentage in the league.

"We need to play defence. Defence wins."

Naugler will spend the second half of the season coaxing his players to tighten up in their own zone while developing his young players for larger roles next season. He said he's already seeing progress through the first 35 games.

"If we continue to play and improve the way we are, we have the ability to win more games," he said.

Welcome break

- The Halifax Lions are heading into a 12-day holiday break on a sour note after a 7-4 loss to the Woodstock Slammers last night at the Forum. Chad Locke registered three assists in the setback, while Mitch Carabin, Patrick Leblanc, Simon Bissonnette and Stephen Popovic provided the scoring.

Sports in brief

HOCKEY Former Halifax Moosehead Jeremy Duchesne has been named East Coast Hockey League goaltender of the week. The Mississippi Sea Wolves stopper won two games, including a 33-shot shutout and a team-record 60-save triumph. Duchesne, 22, was the 119th overall selection of the Philadelphia Flyers in 2005.

CHL Cape Breton Screaming Eagles forward Robert Slaney was named the Canadian Hockey League's offensive player of the week yesterday. The 20-year-old had five goals and two assists in four games, helping Cape Breton to three wins.

CHL Nicholas Goyens has resurfaced after being kicked off the Halifax Mooseheads for an off-ice incident midway through last season. The 20-year-old blueliner signed with the International Hockey League's Bloomington PrairieThunder and is scheduled to make his debut with the team tomorrow.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

SCOREBOARD

QMJHL

TONIGHT'S GAMES
Moncton at Cape Breton
P.E.I. at Quebec

TOMORROW'S GAMES
Rimouski at Montreal
Drummondville at Shawinigan
Lewiston at Saint John
Val-d'Or at Rouyn-Noranda
P.E.I. at Victoriaville

NHL

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS
Atlanta 4 Ottawa 1
Carolina 3 Montreal 2
Toronto 3 New Jersey 2 (SO)
Philadelphia 5 Colorado 2
Washington 5 N.Y. Islanders 4 (OT)
Calgary at St. Louis
Phoenix at Dallas
Chicago at Edmonton
N.Y. Rangers at Anaheim



The Nutcracker Luncheon held on December 10th, 2008 at the WTCC was another spectacular success. Special thanks to our sponsors, members of the Honour Guard, guests and volunteers that helped make this holiday favourite an unforgettable experience.

We look forward to seeing you again next year.
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Automotive

A METRO JOINT VENTURE WITH: carguide magazine.com



EDITOR: KUMAR SAHA, KUMAR.SAHA@METRONEWS.CA

MINI E: Future's electric

Green car shows the power of plug-ins at L.A. Auto Show

JIM ROBINSON
for Metro Canada



The MINI E is an all-electric two-seater that has a range of about 150-plus miles with a top of speed of about 150 km/h.

The MINI stand at the Los Angeles Auto Show is one of the last places I expected to find one of the biggest green car stories of the year, but that's what the MINI E is now.

While the Chevy Volt is still months, and perhaps now years away, BMW, which owns MINI, presented the electrically powered MINI E to the global media for the first time in Los Angeles.

Not merely a concept car, 500 MINI E vehicles will be shipped to California, New York and New Jersey for testing with private and corporate customers.

MINI had a veritable fleet of them available for test drives and it proved eye opening, especially the acceleration which would leave many performance cars in the dust.

BMW is on record as stating it plans to be in series production in the mid-term of all-electric vehicles, starting with the MINI E, as part of the company's 'Number One' strategy.

The MINI E's electric drive produces a peak power of 204 hp and 162 lb/ft of torque that is routed to the front wheels through a single-stage helical gearbox.

On the street, the MINI E goes from 0-100 km/h in 8.5 seconds with an electronically limited top speed of 152 km/h.

Range is subjective but with 58 per cent power in the battery, I was told that was good for about 100 miles which I assume meant in-town, not highway.

The MINI E is based on the current hatchback model but will be offered only as a two-seater because the massive lithium-ion battery pack takes up the entire back seat and most of the rear cargo space leaving room for a small carry-on bag or two.

The lithium-ion storage unit has a maximum capacity of 35 kilowatt hours (kWh) and transmits energy to the electric motor as direct current at a nominal 380 volts. The rechargeable battery is made up of 5,088 cells grouped into 48 modules. These modules are packaged into three battery elements that are compactly arranged inside the MINI E.

According to the people I spoke with, a full recharge draws a maximum of 28-kilowatt hours of electricity from the grid. Roughly speaking, a kilowatt-hour translates into 5.4 miles for a total of about 150-plus miles depending on your driving habits.

Starting is basically the same as the MINI with an electronic key fob that is inserted into a slot on the dash and then a starter button is pushed.



The MINI signature central gauge includes an LED display indicating power consumption in red and power recuperation in green.

There is no sound at startup. Pull the transmission mounted shifter back to Drive and you're ready to go, but don't hit the accelerator too hard because the MINI E takes off like a rocket. With 204 hp, it is about the same at the turbocharged MINI Cooper S but without any noise.

MINI E

Type: Luxury electric two-seater
Price: Not available
HP: 204

Highlights

- All electric
- Regenerative braking
- Smooth ride

Every time the driver lifts off the accelerator pedal, the electric motor acts as a generator. This results in braking force, and the power recovered from the kinetic energy is fed back to the battery.

This interaction ensures a comfortable and smooth driving experience. In city traffic, some 75 per cent of all deceleration can be done without the brakes. Making substantial use of this energy regeneration feature extends the car's range by up to 20 per cent.

Regenerative braking feels like a parachute being popped open. And each time you lift, the brake lights come on to warn drivers behind you because the deceleration is so abrupt. You can get around it by left foot braking but that seriously lessens range because the whole system depends on as much regenerative power as possible.

A car like this in the city makes a believer in an electric future out of anyone. But Los Angeles is one thing and Canada is another.

How it would perform in the winter with the heater and lights on would be an issue, as anyone with electric heat at home will tell you.

But the great thing about the MINI E, and the "green" cars at the Los Angeles Auto Show, is that something is being done and there is a future for the automobile.

Mercedes BlueTEC a hit with celebrities

CLEAN CAR When Academy award nominee Naomi Watts celebrated her 40th birthday in Los Angeles recently, her partner Liev Schreiber (X-Men, The Manchurian Candidate) surprised her with a spectacular present: a Mercedes-Benz ML320 BlueTEC.

Liev and Naomi are among the actors and musicians to discover the exceptional performance and efficiency of Mercedes-Benz BlueTEC, the world's cleanest, state-of-the-art diesel technology.

In addition to Liev Schreiber and Naomi Watts, fellow BlueTEC clean diesel drivers from motion pictures and television include Desperate Housewives star Kyle McLaughlin, Sex and the City siren Kim Cattrall, Academy Award nominee and Golden Globe Winner Gary Oldman, and Phantom of the Opera star and singer Emmy Rossum.

"My ML320 BlueTEC has all the power and luxury you'd expect of a Mercedes-Benz, plus the efficiency and low environmental impact of an economy or even hybrid vehicle," says Emmy Rossum. "BlueTEC really is the best of both worlds."

Seven-time Grammy winning artist Alanis Morissette chose the fuel-efficient Mercedes-Benz BlueTEC for the video of Underneath, the first single and video from her 2008 album, Flavors of Entanglement.

"Making green choices on a local level is important in creating global change," says Morissette. "I'm glad that Mercedes-Benz has introduced a great option with BlueTEC."

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14 automotive

It's a buyer's market in '09

AutoPilot



Michael Goetz

Veteran auto journalist

Well, good day. The nice people at Metro have offered me this perch, so I might pontificate on automotive matters on a weekly basis.

I'll start with a warning: I sometimes get over-excited by car stuff and could spray spittle while I talk. If that happens, you might want to move back a bit.

Actually I won't really be pontificating (too much), as I hate being preached to as much as the next guy. I'm just going to throw out some news, views, trends, ideas, and stories your way, to contribute to the ongoing dialogue people just can't stop having about vehicles, car culture, and driving. My fervent wish that one day it might be thought of as a good bottle of 5W30 synthetic — car talk lubrication you could count on.

And the topic for today is 2009.

Don't know if you've noticed, but there's this thing called the global economic crisis and 2009 just might be the year the North American auto industry goes to hell in a hybrid hand basket. But for anybody contemplating a vehicle purchase, 2009 is shaping up really, really nicely.

For one thing, all the automakers are ready to deal. The usual suspects will continue to discount, but they have been joined by brands like Toyota and BMW, who were previously thought to have discount-resistant DNA.

Honda is probably the next convert, as it didn't match Toyota's recent reductions, and suffered the consequences, with poor sales during November and December.

And for all the talk of tight credit, we've yet to see that become a factor on the showroom floor. GM, Ford and Chrysler, will no longer use low monthly leasing rates to drive sales, because, well, because it almost killed them (through a combination of overly optimistic resale values and getting saddled with gangly vehicles that were a tough sell when crude was over 100 bucks a barrel).

But interest rates are still way low, and most automakers offer very attractive financing deals. Be cognizant, however, that some of these numbers are possible because the term of the loan has been pushed to five, six, or seven years.

All the automakers are ready to deal. The usual suspects will continue to discount, but they have been joined by brands like Toyota and BMW, who were previously thought to have discount-resistant DNA.

Of course, the main attraction is the cars, and there is an unusually large number of intriguing new products and technologies to watch, and possibly secure for your driveway, in 2009.

This product expansion has been brought on by the push for global cars and green cars, low-sulphur diesel finally being available at North American pumps, and sheer panic on the part of the world's automakers. (Ever notice how wide awake you are, after you've had a sphincter moment?)

We'll look more closely at those automotive trends, and possibly a few more bodily functions, in future instalments of Auto Pilot.

Michael Goetz has been writing about cars and editing automotive publications for over 20 years. He lives in Toronto with his family and a neglected 1967 Jaguar E-type.

Automotive in brief

HYBRID The all-new 2009 Honda Insight hybrid will make its world debut in January at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The five-passenger, five-door Insight is expected to be the most affordable hybrid car available when it goes on sale in the spring of 2009. The Insight is expected to have annual global sales of 200,000 units per year and will utilize a new interactive, driver-focused fuel economy enhancement technology named the Ecological Drive Assist System (Eco Assist).



Luck of the draw
One of the more unusual measures of economic uncertainty being reported nowadays concerns the takings of casinos on the Las Vegas Strip. According to Reuters, the casinos won 26 per cent less money from gamblers in October than they did a year earlier. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Travel



Ancient Egypt exhibit

From Friday to Aug. 16, 2009, Ottawa's Museum of Civilization will host an exhibit called Tombs of Eternity: The Afterlife in Ancient Egypt. The artifacts on display will include sarcophagi, amulets, sculptures, beads, weapons, jewelery and human and animal mummies. The basalt sarcophagus lid at left is part of the exhibit. See *civilization.ca* for details. METRO NEWS SERVICES

TRAVELDESK@METRONEWS.CA

Getting an eyeful at NYC's Museum of Sex

This institution brings a whole new meaning to 'too much information'

TheTravelJunkie





The Museum of Sex (MoSex, for short) in New York City takes a scholarly approach to its subject.

JULIA DIMON/FOR METRO CANADA

While Manhattan is home to dozens of cultural museums dedicated to high-brow art, it has only one cultural institution where you can fondle a love doll, watch panda porn and learn about the sexual habits of the honey bee.

The Museum of Sex, which opened in 2002, claims to be the most "stimulating museum in New York." You can find a handful of sex museums scattered across Europe and Asia, but this one favours information rather than just titillation — specifically, it aims to "preserve and present the history, evolution and cultural significance of human sexuality."

Since the Museum of Sex, a.k.a MoSex, is set to spice up its permanent collection, I figured this was a good time to check it out.

The first — and certainly most interesting — of its three galleries contains an exhibit called The Sex Lives of Animals. Strolling amidst photo displays and anatomically correct statues of creatures mid-coitus, I learn that plenty of animals mate for reasons other than procreation. Apparently, they engage in all sorts of acts for pleasure — just two of more memorable pursuits I learned about involved the West Indian manatee and the Gray whale, both of which indulge in some remarkable group activities.

The exibit also illustrates how prevalent homosexuality is in nature. It's a form of social bonding, affection and courtship that has been documented in more than 500 species, including lions, penguins and primates.

I walked past a wall of tapir, ostrich and killer whale genitaliato the next exhibit, called Action: Sex and the Moving Image. This selection of media clips looks at the history of sex on film, from metaphorical movies dating back to the 1930s through burlesque flicks and modern-day pornography.

Surprisingly, the most shocking things I saw were Pamela Anderson and Paris Hilton's explicit sex tapes. With videos like these, it's no wonder that visitors have to be at least 18 years old to enter the museum.

I dragged myself from the den of cinematic sin to the final gallery, a room filled with a mishmash of paraphernalia: squeezable latex love dolls, a nine-foot S&M suspension cage, anime videos, pinup posters and antique vibrators.

I leave the Museum of Sex with the following conclusions: One, human sexuality is complicated; two, our concepts of sex, norms and taboos are constantly changing; and three, West Indian manatees are having more sex than I am.

Julia Dimon is co-host of Word Travels, airing on OLN, and editor of thetraveljunkie.ca.

MoSex

- For information on admission fees, hours and discounted tickets visit museumofsex.com.

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Varadero 3.5-Star FROM $829
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare, transfers and 7 nights 3.5-star all-inclusive accom.

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Jack Black appears on the Office
Comedian Jack Black is set to guest star in hit show The Office. The actor will appear in an episode slated to air in February, right after the SuperBowl. IMDB.COM

Entertainment



More Will

Actor Will Smith is in talks to reprise two of his most successful recent movie roles in a Hancock sequel and a prequel to I Am Legend. IMDB.COM

Twilight sequel harder, star says

MOVIES The surprise success of Twilight, the teen vampire movie that boasted a bigger opening North American weekend box office than the new James Bond, could make the sequel harder to sell, its leading actors said.

The movie, based on the novel by Stephenie Meyer, made $69.6 million US in movie theatres over its first weekend last month. "We had nothing to lose in the first one," said British actor Robert Pattinson.

Metallica confirm Guitar Hero game

MUSIC Metallica has finally confirmed "the worst-kept secret in rock'n'roll" and unveiled details of the upcoming Guitar Hero game devoted to the band.

According to metallica.com the game "allows you to play as us in either single instrument or band career game modes" and will likely be released in the first half of next year.

Guilty plea in Guns piracy case

MUSIC A man accused of illegally posting songs on the Internet from an unreleased album by rock band Guns N' Roses has pleaded guilty and faces up to one year in prison, a prosecutor said.

Kevin Cogill, 28, pleaded guilty to a copyright violation. The charge was reduced because he is cooperating with authorities to identify the source of the leak. REUTERS

Anti-Christmas Classics

Take a break from the irritating well-wishing with these fun films

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

As we enter the last shopping week before the most commercial of all holidays, it's getting to be that special time of year when everyone gets a little sick of Christmas.

After all, you can only hear the high pitched squeal of the Chipmunks whining about wanting "a hoola-hoop" while you claw your way through the riotous mob of mall shoppers so many times before your holiday cheer turns into black bile.

Fortunately a number of filmmakers have developed their own antidotes to the Christmas season. Here are a few films you can watch when a break from all the carolling and irritating well-wishing is needed.

• **THE REF:** Ted Demme may have died tragically young, but at least he gave us the finest anti-Christmas comedy before he left.



Actor Billy Bob Thornton portrays a mall santa in the anti-Christmas movie Bad Santa.

Dennis Leary stars as a chain-smoking jewel thief who holds a dysfunctional family hostage on Christmas Eve. More holiday movies should have an emotional climax in which Kevin Spacey tells his mother, "You know what I'm going to get you next Christmas, Mom? A big wooden cross, so that every time you feel unappreciated for your sacrifices, you can climb on up and nail yourself to it."

• **BAD SANTA:** Director Terry Zwigoff says that he and his ghost screenwriters, the Coen brothers, used to describe Bad Santa as "the Christmas movie only three Jews could make." Considering the fact that this film stars a foul-mouthed elf, a woman with a Santa fetish, and a safe-cracking mall Santa who gets drunk and pees his pants on the job, they've got a point.

• **DIE HARD:** It's not commonly discussed, but the movie that made Bruce Willis a star is not only set at Christmas, but ends with a rendition of Let It Snow. If there's a better way of ringing in the holidays then watching Willis shoot Alan Rickman with a gun concealed on his back with tape that reads "Seasons Greetings," I haven't found it.

• **GREMLINS:** Joe Dante's mini-monster classic gleefully sends up the holiday with puppet monsters tearing apart a Frank Capra-esque town on Christmas Eve. The scene in which the Gremlins take up carolling and Phoebe Cates' darkly comic monologue about the Christmas her father died while playing Santa can only be fully appreciated at the peak of a yuletide burnout.

• **BRAZIL:** Though not overtly about Christmas, Terry Gilliam's dystopian classic gleefully satirizes every element of 20th century excess; including the holiday season. The movie opens with a family huddled around the Christmas tree when an anti-terrorist swat team bursts through the ceiling and arrests the father at gunpoint. If a scene like that doesn't get you in the holiday spirit, nothing will.

Wally Lamb on time, tragedy and Oprah

By the summer of 1999, Wally Lamb was the best-selling author of two hugely popular novels. But his literary credentials didn't cut much ice with the tough crowd he encountered during a speaking engagement at York Correctional Facility, a women's prison in hardscrabble eastern Connecticut.

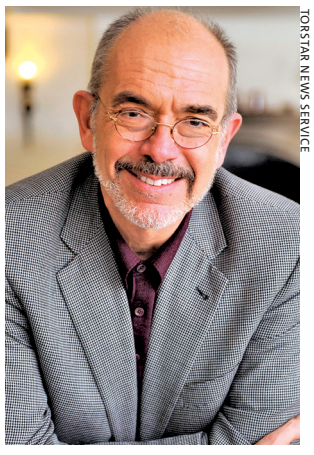
"I doubt that more than one or two of them had read either of my books," recalled Lamb, during a Toronto stop last week to promote his newly published third title, The Hour I First Believed. "I found out after the fact that the only thing they were really interested in was seeing the dude who knew Oprah."

Lamb's 1992 debut She's Come Undone and the 1998 follow-up, I Know This Much is True, had both been selected for the influential TV host's book club, instantly turning the former high school teacher into a publishing phenomenon with an immense following.

"Somebody once said they love it when they see the authors come out and sit on the couch with Oprah because we all look like the deer that got caught in the headlights," says Lamb, 58, a lifelong Connecticut resident. "Her endorsement is a boon and a blessing, but you also have to figure out how to deal with it. Suddenly you have millions of readers with expectations of what you're going to do next. And that can be a little bit intimidating.

"I struggled with that for a fair amount of time when I started to write this novel. I was afraid to write the first sentence, really, until I finally said, 'Write it for yourself. Don't worry about other people's expectations.'"

Even then, The Hour I First Believed took nearly nine years to complete. On the day Lamb was invited to speak at the prison, he was wrapping up a university teaching post with the intention of writing full-time. Instead, he ended up launching a creative-writing program at the prison that eventually yielded two anthologies of the inmates' efforts.



TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Wally Lamb

The experience serves a significant backdrop to The Hour I First Believed, which is partly set in a Connecticut correctional institution for women. The novel's protagonist, Caelum, is descended from the pioneering feminist who helped found the prison. Caelum's drug-dependent wife, Maureen, becomes an inmate at the same facility after committing vehicular manslaughter.

Maureen's addiction is a consequence of having been traumatized while working as a school nurse at Columbine during the 1999 shooting rampage. Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, the perpetrators of the Columbine massacre, appear briefly as characters. But their rampage is more a trigger for the novel's events than its subject.

"The media got it wrong to some extent when they depicted Klebold and Harris as victims of bullying," says Lamb. "In my estimation they somehow developed a superiority complex to the point where they felt justified in playing God and meting out this depraved form of justice that, in their minds, people somehow deserved. But ultimately, the novel is about people who are collaterally damaged by all sorts of trauma and chaos — everything from the chaos of participation in war to having your home flooded out by Hurricane Katrina." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

WIN a chance to see John Gracie at the Schooner Showroom

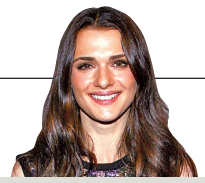
You and 9 friends could win tickets to the show, as well as a collection of John Gracie's Christmas CD's. To enter, send an e-mail to **susan.whitty@metronews.ca.** Enjoy the holiday stylings of John Gracie, Dec. 20th at 8pm.

Contest closes Dec. 17, 2008 at noon. One entry per person. Winner will be contacted via email. Must be at 19+.



metro
Do it daily.

Rachel in a cat suit?
Actress Rachel Weisz is reportedly the favourite of movie bosses to take on the role of Catwoman in a sequel to the Batman movie The Dark Knight. **FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK**

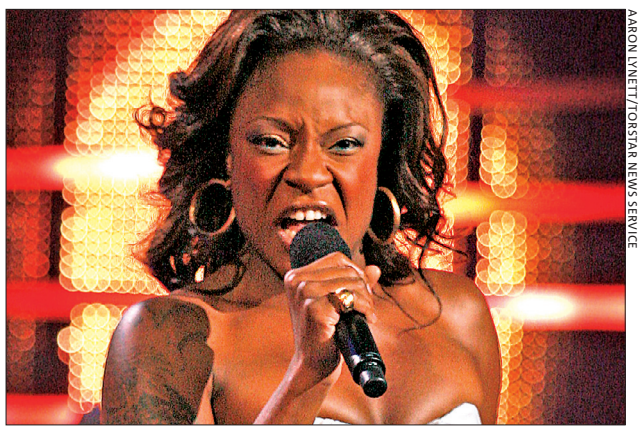


No Canadian Idol next year

IntelleVision



Rick McGinnis
rick.mcginnis@metronews.ca



AARON LYNETT/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Jully Black performed at Canadian Idol in September.

I'M JUST SAYIN': Yesterday began with an anonymous reader sending me an e-mail asking how I felt, now that my recent prediction — that one major Canadian network would probably always have an edge over its competition as long as it has two big reality franchises in its schedule — was obviously stale-dated, now that said major network was cancelling one of the shows.

After a quick Google and a check through the rest of my inbox, I wrote back and asked just what the hell they were talking about — this would be big news, and there wasn't a sign of it anywhere.

It was true, they replied — cast and crew of the show had been pink-slipped just before the holidays. A further Google revealed the likely source — an item on the Voteforetheworst.com web site, claiming that Canadian Idol was "cancelled, over, kaput, done."

I put a call in to a CTV publicist, who claimed that this was the first he'd heard of it. I asked him to "either confirm or deny" the story, rather relishing using those words as they were meant to be used for the first time in my whole career as a journalist. Wisely, he declined to do either, and said that he'd try to get someone from programming for me to talk to, though he wasn't making any promises.

Another trawl through the web came up empty — no press release from CTV, no brief from the Canadian Press, but just before noon, a new thread had opened up on CTV's own web site forum titled "no more Canadian Idol," and in just over two hours, the sadly inevitable post blaming Steven Harper was up, followed by a quote vaguely attributed to Idol judge Zack Werner lamenting that: "after 6 years the economy has come crashing down on idol. strange that ctv has sponsers for a show on which we watch american kids seek fame and fortune by singing but not enuff sponsers for our own (sic)."

Reactions on CTV's forum ranged from skeptical to hysterical, but by 2 p.m. there was a Facebook group devoted to saving the show, and further rumours were circulating between the Facebook site, CTV's forum and VFTW that another network had come to a deal with FremantleMedia and Insight Productions, the show's international and local producers, to take it over. With only two private major networks in the whole country, that would mean Global was being as conspicuously silent as CTV.

As I write this, the "Save Idol" Facebook site has 80 members, and my e-mail source has gone silent, and CTV has finally come back with a terse message that, "As a result of the current economic climate, production of Canadian Idol will rest for the 2009 broadcast year," though they retain the rights to the show. And that was the day that was.

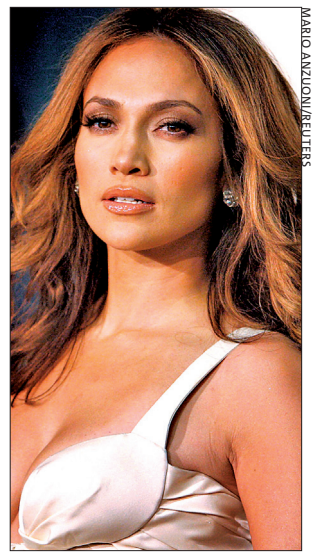
Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.

New rom-com role for Lopez

Jennifer Lopez has come on board to star in the romantic comedy Plan B for CBS' nascent movie division.

The project involves a single woman who attempts to conceive via artificial insemination and winds up in a quandary after she finds romance. Production is scheduled to start in the spring, making it one of the first projects to get a green light at CBS Films.

Lopez has starred in a number of comedy hits such as Maid in Manhattan and Monster In-Law, and is set to star in the heist picture The Governess for Columbia. **REUTERS**



MARIO ANZUONI/REUTERS

Jennifer Lopez has signed up for a new romantic comedy.

In brief

REALITY SERIES Fox Reality Channel is developing a series that puts an attention-getting gender twist on the trophy-spouse reality genre. The network has ordered nine hours of Househusbands of Hollywood, which follows a collection of stay-at-home spouses of successful L.A. women. If popular, Fox Reality hopes to expand the Househusbands brand beyond a single series. **REUTERS**

See complete online movie listings, trailers, reviews and purchase tickets at metronews.ca/movies

GlobalStyle



Kenya Hunt

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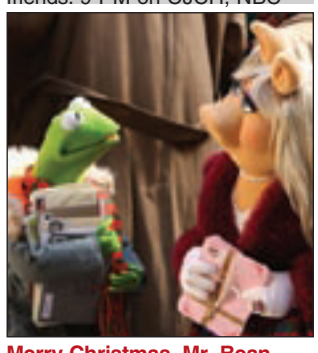
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HA		H	D	B	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	
12/17/08		31	31	31	ABC	News (N)	ABC Wld News	Inside Edition	Chronicle	Pushing Daisies (N)		Private Practice (N)		Sexy Money
		7	7	7	ASN	The Road to Avonlea		Instant Star	TMZ (N)	Pushing Daisies (N)		Private Practice (N)		TBA
		11	11	11	CBC	Coronation St.	Jeopardy! (N)	Mr. Bean	Frosty Returns	Holiday Festival on Ice		CBC News: The National		The Hour
		2	2	2	CBC-F	Pyramide (SC)	Mr. Bean (SC)	Antarctique	*Les Bagnoles* ★★★ (2006, Comédie), Paul Newman (SC)			Bougon		Le Téléjournal
		32	32	32	CBS	News (N)	Evening News	The Insider (N)	Entertainment	Old Christine	Gary Unmarr	Criminal Minds "Normal"		CSI: NY
		69	69	69	CFTM	TVA 18 heures	Le Cercle (SC)	Km/h (SC)	Poule-oeufs or	*La Panthère rose* ★★ (2006, Comédie)			Juste pour rire	TVA 22 heures
		6	6	6	CIHF	Entertainment	ET Canada	Bones		Bones (HDTV PA)		Ancestors in the Attic		News (N)
		9	9	9	CJCH	etalk	Hollywood	CSI: NY (HDTV) (N)		A Muppets Christmas		Criminal Minds "Normal"		News (N)
		10	10	10	ELTV	Swap Shop (Live)		Fuelin' Around	Au Natural (N)	Doc Talk	Fuelin' Around	EastLink Television		
		36	36	36	FOX	Deal-No Deal	The Simpsons	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Secret Millionaire (N)		Bones (HDTV PA)		Fox First
		12	12	12	NBC	News (N)	NBC News	Hollywood	Extra (N)	A Muppets Christmas		Life "Trapdoor" (N)		Law & Order
		29	29	29	NW	World News	Business	CBC News	Newman	The Hour		CBC News: The National		Disney
		4	4	4	PBS-B	NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		Greater Boston	Ask This Old	Great Performances (HDTV) (N)				L.A. Holiday
		35	35	35	PBS-D	NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		Business Rpt.	Worldfocus	Frontline "From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians" (HDTV Part 1 of 2)				
		68	68	68	TQS	(6:30) Le Retour (SC)		*Un défi pour Noël* (2005, Com. Sentimentale), Carly Pope				Pushing Daisies (SC)		110 pour cent
	news	23	96	96	BNN	Business News	Headline	Market Call	Commodities	Workopolis TV	Business News	Squeeze Play		Market Call
		18	18	18	CNN	(5) The Situation Room		Lou Dobbs Tonight		Campbell Brown: No Bias		Larry King Live		Cooper 360
	sports	54	54	54	GOLF	Big Break X: Michigan		Tour Clinic	Tour Clinic	Bag Men	Golf Central	Year in Review (Part 2 of 2)		School of Golf
		52	52	52	RSE	Prime Time Sports		Darts World Premier League.				Best Damn Sports Show		Sportsnet Con.
		55	55	55	SCOR	Hockey Talk	Game On	Woodbine Year in Review		Cabby Unlimit	Poker Million Pound Challenge.		NBA Basketball	
		45	45	45	SPD	Unique Whips		Pinks	Pass Time	Am. Thunder	Am. Thunder	Pinks	Pinks Outtakes	Wrecked
		53	53	53	TSN	Off the Record	SportsCentre	That's Hockey!	NHL Pregame	NHL Hockey Calgary Flames at Minnesota Wild. (HDTV) (Live)				
	family	43	43	43	FAM	Zoey 101	Life Derek	Wizards-Place	That's-Raven	Zack & Cody	Natural-Sadie	Han. Montana	Life Derek	Ned's School
		44	44	44	TOON	Christmas Carol: Scrooge		Santa Claus	Bugs Bunny & Tweety Show		Wayside	Johnny Test	Futurama	The Critic
		26	26	26	TREE	Max & Ruby	Drummer Boy	Blue's Room	Nght Grdn	Backyardigans	Yo Gabba	Lost in Snow	Miss Spider	Comfy Couch
		27	27	27	YTV	The Happy Elf		Charlie Brown	Sabrina-Witch	Mon. Warriors	Fresh Prince	Futurama	Prank Patrol	Mystery Hnt.
	cable variety	16	16	16	A&E	Cold Case Files		CSI: Miami "Lost Son"		Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Parking Wars
		70	70	70	APTN	News		Canadian Geographic		Rez, White and Blues		APTN National News: Contact		Tribal Treks
		50	50	50	BET	106 & Park: BET's Top 10 Live Jamie Foxx performance.				*South Central* ★★★ (1992, Drama) Glenn Plummer.				Brother
		37	37	37	BRVO	Street Legal		Desperate Housewives		Berkeley	Bravo!Videos	Wingfield	The Letters	Arts & Minds
		25	25	25	CMT	Tara Oram's Christmas Carol		Cheerleaders	Cheerleaders	Home Improve.	Home Improve.	Reba	Reba	Hope & Faith
		49	49	49	COM	Laughs	Comedy Now	Air Farce	Just for Laughs		Corner Gas	The Simpsons	South Park	Comedy Now
		153	153	153	COURT	Missing Link		The Investigators		Cops Uncut	Dumb Criminal	Spy Web: Early Russian		Investigators
		38	38	38	DISC	How It's Made	How It's Made	Daily Planet (N)		Cash Cab	Destroyed	Monster Moves		Mayday
		34	48	48	HGTV	Holmes on Homes		House Hunters	Property Virgin	Mansions	The Stagers	Property Virgin	Unsellable	$1M Listing
		46	46	46	HIST	Captain Cook: Obsession		NCIS "Probie"		Cities of the Underworld		Captain Cook: Obsession		NCIS
		17	17	17	MM	Born to Be	Born to Be	50 Sexiest Videos		50 Sexiest Videos		50 Sexiest Videos		Sexiest Videos
		19	19	19	MMM	MusicProfile	Back In	Don't Forget the Lyrics!		Don't Forget the Lyrics!		Don't Forget the Lyrics!		All Time 10
		201	201	201	M1	*Employee of the Month*		(8:15) *Grindstone Road* (2008, Suspense) Fairuza Balk.				*The Invasion* ★★ (2007, Science Fiction)		
		48	23	23	OLN	The Amazing Race 7		Ed's Up	Videos	Trips Money Can't Buy		Adventures	Ed's Up	Word Travels
		51	51	51	PEACH	Seinfeld	Friends	House-Payne	House-Payne	*G.I. Jane* ★★★ (1997, Drama) Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen.				
		206	206	206	PIX	(6) *Rollercoaster*		(8:15) *Blind Terror* ★★ (1999, Suspense), Maxim Roy				*Godzilla* ★★ (1998, Science Fiction)		
		67	67	67	RDI	RDI en direct	RDI en direct	24 Heures en 60 minutes		Grands reportages (SC)		Le Téléjournal (SC)		RDI en direct
		39	39	39	SHOW	EastEnders	Saxondale	Kink in Hair	Kink in Hair	Durham County		Billable Hours	G-Spot	Starter Wife
		40	40	40	SLICE	X-Weighted "Sarah"		Til Debt-Part	Rich Poor	X-Weighted "Debbi"		Real Housewives of OC		Cattle Drive
		47	47	47	SPACE	Stargate SG-1		Lost		Star Trek: Deep Space Nine		Ultimate Super Heroes-Villains		Fields of Fear
		14	14	14	SPIKE	CSI: Crime Scene		CSI: Crime Scene		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.		The Ultimate Fighter (HDTV)		
		57	98	98	STAR	etalk	Hollywood	Look-A-Like	Look-A-Like	TMZ (N)	etalk	DU Why	Britney Back?	Tonight Show
		21	21	21	TLC	What Not to Wear		Jon & Kate Plus 8		Jon & Kate Plus 8		Jon & Kate	Jon & Kate	Wallendas
		56	34	34	TROP	Reality	Ad Persuasion	Beverly Hills, 90210		Reality	What Happen?	Family Guy	Seinfeld	Seinfeld
		20	20	20	TV5	(6:55) Cible	Journal de Fr2	Toute une histoire		*En marge des jours* (2007, Com. dramatique)			La 25ème im	Partir
		28	28	28	V	Side Effects		Murder, She Wrote		Summer Wine	Dinnerladies	*Christmas in Connecticut* ★★ (1945, Comedy)		
		60	97	97	VIVA	Mysterious Ways		Judging Amy		Commander In Chief		The West Wing		Mediums
		22	22	22	W	(6) *Borrowed Hearts* (1997)		Friends	Will & Grace	Shopping Bags	Shopping Bags	*The Man Who Saved Christmas* (2002)		
		251	251	251	WGN	Be-Millionaire	Evening News	Two/Half Men	Family Guy	Victoria's Secret Fashion		Stylista "The Right Fit"		WGN News

critics'corner

A Muppets Christmas: Letters to Santa
If it's half as much fun as "The Muppet Christmas Carol" or the specials they did with John Denver, this new holiday special is going to be a treat. When Kermit and company accidentally intercept three children's letters to St. Nick, they vow to hand-deliver them to the North Pole themselves with a little help from their friends. 9 PM on CJCH, NBC



Merry Christmas, Mr. Bean
The usually hyper Mr. Bean (Rowan Atkinson) gets even more excited during the holiday season in this special. His adventures include befriending a Salvation Army band, trying to get a giant Christmas tree home and failing to find the perfect gift for a woman — who subsequently leaves him. But don't worry; it's a Christmas special, so how can it not have a happy ending? 8 PM on CBC

Holiday Festival on Ice
How about those Celtics? No, not the basketball team from Boston — the Celtic music that has made Cape Breton famous. It's featured in this year's edition of the skating special, as Kurt Browning, Jamie Sale and David Pelletier, Sasha Cohen, Jeffrey Buttle, Shawn Sawyer, and others perform to the music of Natalie MacMaster and the Cottars. The theme? "A Celtic Christmas," of course. 9 PM on CBC



Watts and Schreiber name son
Actors Naomi Watts and Liev Schreiber have named their new son, born Saturday, Samuel Kai Schreiber. **PEOPLE.COM**

Celebrity Buzz

50 Cent talks of fire

PEOPLE 50 Cent has opened up about the fire that destroyed his home earlier this year, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The rapper, whose real name is Curtis Jackson, refused to openly blame Shaniqua Tompkins for the blaze in May, but did confirm she was ordered to leave his home in Dix Hills, N.Y., just days before it was torched.

"The courts told her she had to leave. It's kind of more like, 'If I can't have you, you can't have it,'" he told Quddus Philippe, a correspondent for U.S. TV show TV One Access.

When Quddus asked the rapper if he believed Tompkins lit the fire, he replied: "Well, I don't want to say that — don't try to make me say something I don't want to say. But, the circumstances to it might seem that way."

Six people, including 50 Cent and Tompkins' 10-year-old son Marquis, were rushed to hospital after the blaze.

Earlier in the year, Tompkins had filed a lawsuit against 50 Cent, claiming he had promised her a house 10 years ago.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



GETTY IMAGES PHOTOS

Williams denies plans to accept Ledger prize

PEOPLE Heath Ledger's ex-fiancee Michelle Williams has denied she was set to accept any awards the late star wins for his role in The Dark Knight, imdb.com reports.

Ledger's performance as The Joker in the last movie he completed before his drug overdose death in January is expected to earn him a clutch of posthumous prizes during the forthcoming awards season. He is already nominated for the Best Supporting Actor Golden Globe, and is hotly tipped to become the first posthumous acting Oscar winner since Peter Finch in 1977.

Williams, the mother of Ledger's daughter Matilida, was thought to be among those contending to accept awards on her ex's behalf, along with his father Kim.

But the actress won't be involved.

"No discussions have been made for Michelle to accept nor are there any plans to take part," her representative says.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Panettiere treats young patients

SHOPPING Hayden Panettiere took patients from Los Angeles' Children's Hospital on a shopping spree over the weekend, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The actress accompanied five girls on a shopping trip on Saturday. Although Panettiere tried to give the group fashion advice, the kids had their own opinions on which outfits they wanted to choose.

"Not many of them listened to me!" Panettiere said, and laughed.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Spears tops ET's hot list

PEOPLE Pop star Britney Spears has topped ET's annual Hot List, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

Spears took the No. 1 spot in the list, made up of stars who have received the most coverage and mentions on the TV program Entertainment Tonight in the past year.

"From a historical election to surprising splits, sizzling romances and major comebacks, 2008 was a remarkable year for celebrity news," an ET writer said.

TV talk-show host Oprah Winfrey followed Spears on the list.

Rounding off the Top 5 were actor Brad Pitt, U.S. president-Elect Barack Obama and actress Angelina Jolie.

Other celebrities included in the Top 20 were actors George Clooney, Tom Cruise, Jennifer Aniston, Will Smith and Miley Cyrus.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Phillippe to spend holidays in Australia with girlfriend

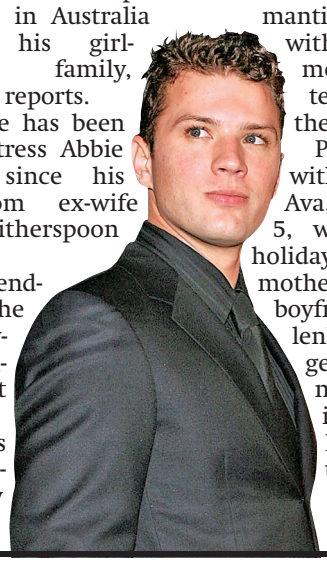
RELATIONSHIPS Actor Ryan Phillippe is set to spend Christmas in Australia meeting his girlfriend's family, imdb.com reports.

Phillippe has been dating actress Abbie Cornish since his split from ex-wife Reese Witherspoon in 2006.

After spending the Thanksgiving holiday last month with his two children by Witherspoon, Phillippe has flown to Australia to enjoy a romantic festive break with his partner, meeting her extended family in the country.

Phillippe's kids with Witherspoon, Ava, 9, and Deacon, 5, will spend the holidays with their mother and her actor boyfriend Jake Gyllenhaal in Los Angeles and Tennessee, according to New York Post gossip column PageSix.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Jennifer is a good singer: Mayer

RELATIONSHIPS Jennifer Aniston loves singing and could have a successful music career, according to boyfriend John Mayer, imdb.com reports.

The actress is shy when it comes to showing off her voice, and only does it when she thinks no one else is listening. But Mayer is so impressed by her vocal talents, he's convinced she could become a recording artist.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Washington gets dual citizenship

PEOPLE Former Grey's Anatomy star Isaiah Washington has become an official citizen of Sierra Leone, imdb.com reports.

The actor was born in Houston, Tex., but has spent several months working with Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma in a bid to secure dual-nationality and celebrate his family's links to the African country.

President Koroma agreed to grant Washington full citizenship and hand him an official Sierra Leone passport in September.

METRO NEWS SERVICES





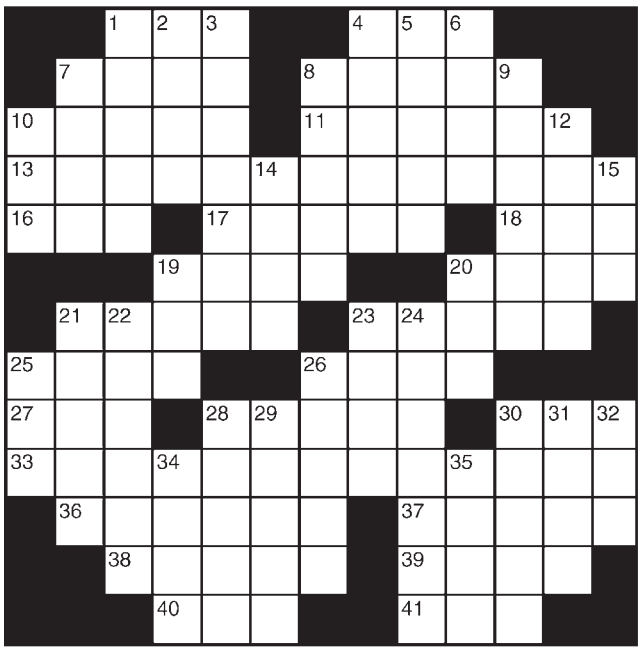
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Take Five



Crossword across

1 Sloppy home
4 Fed. watchdog org.
7 Gambling game
8 Vise
10 Had a bug
11 Esteems
13 What Jack did
16 Still, in verse
17 Senior moment
18 Cattle call?
19 Yon maiden's
20 Succotash ingredient
21 Steeple
23 Click-and-drag device
25 Reynolds or Lancaster
26 "Monopoly" pair
27 Blackbird
28 Construction-site machine
30 Bashful
33 Jill's fate
36 Read
37 Standards
38 Looks for
39 Rainbow
40 Dentist's degree (Abbr.)
41 Baseballer's hat

Crossword down

1 Beauty parlor
2 "Star —"
3 Alpine singer
4 Soft silk thread
5 Terpsichore's domain
6 Cupid's specialty
7 Conflagration
8 Fish side dish
9 Ads for upcoming TV shows
10 Honest politician
12 Cussed
14 Tortoise's opponent
15 Negative prefix
19 Smack
20 Prompt
21 Dawn
22 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, etc.
23 Chinese dynasty
24 Vast
25 Cudgel
26 Copenhagen populace
28 Gave hints
29 Puts on the line
30 Denude
31 Fashion lines?
32 Century fractions (Abbr.)
34 Raised
35 "In — penny, in ..."

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

	7	9				3	5	
			9		7			
6	4			3			1	9
		8	4		3	9		
2								7
		4	2		8	5		
1	6			5			9	2
			1		9			
	2	5				1	4	

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

U	T	A	H	■	A	D	O	■	T	R	A	P		
S	A	L	E	■	S	E	A	■	H	O	P	E		
S	C	A	R	■	P	E	T	E	R	O	S	E		
R	O	S	E	H	I	P	■	M	O	T	E	L		
■	■	■	S	I	C	■	R	U	M	■	■	■		
O	B	E	Y	S	■	H	I	P	B	O	N	E		
R	O	O	■	■	B	A	G	■	■	N	O	N		
B	O	N	E	D	R	Y	■	S	H	A	R	D		
■	■	■	T	E	A	■	A	P	E	■	■	■		
G	H	O	U	L	■	D	R	Y	L	A	N	D		
L	A	N	D	L	O	R	D	■	P	L	E	A		
A	L	E	E	■	F	O	O	■	E	T	A	L		
M	O	S	S	■	A	P	R	■	R	O	P	E		

2	7	6	9	3	5	1	4	8
4	9	3	2	1	8	7	5	6
5	1	8	6	4	7	2	3	9
3	6	1	5	8	2	9	7	4
8	5	2	7	9	4	3	6	1
9	4	7	1	6	3	5	8	2
7	3	4	8	2	9	6	1	5
1	8	9	3	5	6	4	2	7
6	2	5	4	7	1	8	9	3

Find today's answers + play more games at metronews.ca

SUDOKU SOLVE TIME:

Under 13 min Genius
13-17 min.....Scholar
17-21 min Smart
21-25 min Not bad
25+ min.....Keep practising

Metro Recipe of the Day



Pesto-Coated Pork Chops

INGREDIENTS:

6 oz (175 g) eggless noodles
2 cups (500 mL) fresh basil leaves
3 garlic cloves, peeled
1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
1/2 tsp (2 mL) freshly ground black pepper
2 tbsp (25 mL) plain dry bread crumbs
2 tbsp (25 mL) extra-virgin olive oil
4 centre-cut pork loin chops (1/2 inch/1 cm thick, about 4 oz/125 g each)

METHOD:

1. Prepare noodles according to package directions. Drain and keep hot. Meanwhile, preheat broiler.
2. Put basil, garlic and a pinch each of salt and black pepper in food processor. Pulse until roughly chopped. Add bread crumbs and process 30 seconds until well blended.
3. With motor running, slowly add oil through feed tube until puréed. Set aside.
4. Coat large heavy ovenproof skillet and broiler rack with nonstick cooking spray. Set skillet over high heat until very hot but not smoking. Sprinkle both sides of chops with remaining salt and black pepper. Sauté chops until browned, about 1 minute on each side. Remove from heat. Spread chops on both sides with pesto and transfer to broiler pan.
5. Broil chops until pesto is slightly darker and juices run clear, about 2 minutes on each side. Divide noodles evenly among 4 plates and top with a pork chop.

SERVES 4

rd.ca
For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to rd.ca or check out Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!


Horoscopes

AVATAR VENUS

ARIES
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
You won't become a casualty of love. Phone a funny friend for a surprise. A flaw is found by a friendly person.

TAURUS
APRIL 21-MAY 21
Take care on slippery surfaces. Someone's gullibility will scare you. Get a strong grip on your sense of responsibility.

GEMINI
MAY 22-JUNE 21
Accept loving attention from your admirers. Someone's intuition gets the better of you. Good fortune comes through being diplomatic.

CANCER
JUNE 22-JULY 22
Somebody's hypochondria will require your patience. An odd stranger intrudes on an important meeting. A mistake leads to mistreatment.

LEO
JULY 23-AUG 23
A researcher uncovers a financial embarrassment. An elder gives evidence of cruelty. You'll need to get out more often..

VIRGO
AUG 24-SEPT 22
A bureaucrat wins a stupid argument. A professional call causes a delay in plans. You're optimistic in the face of harsh reality.

LIBRA
SEPT 23-OCT 23
A fearless person accepts adjustments gracefully. An egotistical friend will back you up. Too much devotion can be frustrating.

SCORPIO
OCT 24-NOV 22
Try to get through to a coward. A bitter person speaks the truth. A chubby pal's attempts to fix things will resolve nothing.

SAGITTARIUS
NOV 23-DEC 21
Everything's okay with a trustworthy person. A dreadful event leads to a disgrace. Someone is waiting for you to make a tough decision.

CAPRICORN
DEC 22-JAN 20
A good friend needs more financial support. A beloved person shows where you went wrong. A flirt breaks up a party.

AQUARIUS
JAN 21-FEB 18
A blundering prankster is more fun than usual. Necessary money is made available to those in need. Avoid nasty spats that are counter-productive.

PISCES
FEB 19-MARCH 20
Resistance to an opponent undermines understanding. An innocent is mired in a strange arrangement.

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metro Do it daily.

This day in history

DEC. 17, 1538: Pope Paul III excommunicates Henry VIII of England.
DEC. 17, 1600: Marriage of Henry IV of France and Marie de' Medici.
DEC. 17, 1718: Great Britain declares war on Spain.
DEC. 17, 1865: First performance of the Unfinished Symphony by Franz Schubert.
DEC. 17, 1903: The Wright Brothers make their first powered and heavier-than-air flight in the Wright Flyer at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

WORDY GURDY®

BY TRICKY RICKY KANE

Every answer is a rhyming pair of words (like FAT CAT and DOUBLE TROUBLE), and they will fit in the letter squares. The number after the definition tells you how many syllables in each word. To win $10, send your original r

1. How-old-you-are measuring standard (1)
2. Daily Planet reporter Lois's jets (1)
3. The B in a BLT seized and carried off (2)
4. Polite bloke's perfumes or aromas (1)
5. Insincerely compliment a baseball hitte
6. Merely one excited sensation (2)
7. Mafioso's surf in "surf and turf" meals (2)

ANSWERS
1. AGE GAUGE 2. LANES PLANES 3. BACON TAKEN 4. CENTS SCENTS
5. FLATTER BATTER 6. SINGLE TINGLE 7. MOBSTERS LOBSTERS

12-17-08

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